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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA
"Renunciation Alone Is Fearless"

S. RADHAKRISHNAN
Spiritual Values in Education

AVINASHILINGAM: *Training of Youth*

ISHERWOOD: *Some Great Devotees*

WILLIAM ERNEST HOCKING
Recollections of Swami Vivekananda



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"RENUNCIATION ALONE IS FEARLESS"

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

THE FOLLOWING *free translation by Swami Vivekananda of several verses from the* Vairagya-Satakam (The Hundred Verses on Renunciation) *is published here for the first time. A Sanskrit work of medieval India, the* Vairagya-Satakam *is traditionally attributed to Bhartrihari.*

The translation is taken from a manuscript, written by Vivekananda himself, which consists of two sheets of paper. One contains the abovementioned verses; the other, which is dated September 1, 1898, contains the first two stanzas of his published poem "Angels Unawares." The manuscript was sent to the Vedanta Society of Southern California by Josephine MacLeod in 1948, shortly before she came to the Hollywood Center where she spent the last days of her life.

Swami Madhavananda, who in 1962 became President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, very kindly identified Swami Vivekananda's translation as being from the Vairagya-Satakam, *and the verses, respectively, as numbers 14-15, 18, 24, 25, 26, 31, 33. Words set in square brackets were also supplied by Swami Madhavananda. The title was provided by the editors. The term "Vidyadharas," in verse 24, refers to demi-gods or spirits of the air.*

Alas, our minds [dally but] in imagination with palaces and pleasure gardens, and thus our lives are spent. [One's]

only food is by begging—and that too is tasteless; one's bed, the dry earth; all of one's family, one's own body; and the only clothing a tattered piece of cloth around the waist—alas, still the desire for enjoyment does not leave a man.

Not knowing the power of flame,
The insect falls into it.
The fish swallows the bait,
Not knowing the hook inside.
And knowing full well the vanities
and dangers of the world,
We cannot give it up—
Such is the power of delusion.

[With rocks cooled by] the spray
of the Ganges waters,
Where the Vidyadharas love to sport—
Have such places in the Himalayas become extinct
That a man should beg [in disgrace] at others' doors?

Have the roots in the mountain forests all disappeared?
Are the springs all dry? Are the trees all withered
That bear sweet fruits and bark for garments
That a man should look with fear on the face
of the fool whose eyebrows are dancing
[In] the wind of the pride of a little wealth?

Arise, let us go into the forest, where pure roots and fruits will be our food, pure water our only drink, and pure leaves our bed—and where the little-minded, the thoughtless, and those whose hearts are cankered with wealth do not exist.

In enjoyment is the fear of disease,
In high birth, the fear of losing caste,

In wealth, the fear of tyrants,
In honor, the fear of losing [it],
In strength, the fear of enemies,
In beauty, the fear of [old age],
In knowledge, the fear of defeat,
In virtue, the fear of scandal,
In the body, the fear of death.
In this life all is fraught with fear:
Renunciation alone is fearless.

[A person's] health [is uprooted by] thousands of [worries] and disease. Where fortune falls open a hundred gates of danger. Whosoever is born, him death will surely swallow. Say, [has] Providence ever created anything that died not?

SPIRITUAL VALUES IN EDUCATION

S. RADHAKRISHNAN

EVERY GREAT civilization has had its own idea of the purpose of education. The Greeks thought of intellectual power and aesthetic perfection; the Romans opined that civic patriotism, loyalty to the state, is the ideal of true education. In this country, however, we looked upon education as a means for initiation into a higher life, to make the people who are once born, twice born. All of us, whatever may be our caste, community, or religion, are born into the world of nature. The necessity and the purpose of education, the purpose of life on earth, is to make us reborn—*dvitiya janma,* that second birth into the world of spirit and freedom. That has been the ideal which motivated our country from the early centuries. Man as he is has to be surpassed. He is incomplete, he has to be completed. Nature has a scheme of planned development. Just as the intellectual man is quite different from the animal, so also the spiritual man is quite different from the intellectual man. What is necessary is to enable the human being, endowed as he is with intellect, will, and emotions, to act from a higher plane, not from the narrow egotistic plane.

We believe that the qualities of a God-man, a man who has risen to an illumined consciousness from the intellectual plane, are three. They are *abhaya, asanga,* and *ahimsa.* Abhaya, or freedom from fear, is somehing we acquire by deepening our awareness and growing into a larger world.

Asanga, nonattachment, is the way in which we should act in this world. "Whatever work I do in this world, I do it out of attachment to the Supreme, out of devotion to the Supreme." Similarly, ahimsa is freedom from hatred. It is the cultivation of love. The intellect must grow to such an extent that it becomes illumined and free from fear. The will has to be strengthened and conformed to the divine purpose, with the result that we free ourselves from any kind of attachment. The emotions will have to be spread over the whole world, the principle of love should animate us, and we must be free from any kind of hatred—that is ahimsa. Abhaya is illumination which results in freedom from fear. Asanga is detachment. Because you are attached to the Supreme, you are detached from the petty concerns of life. Ahimsa is *vairatyaga*—freedom from hatred. That is the way in which your emotions should grow. You must not breed hatred for anyone, but yet do your duty. So intellect, will, and emotions have all to be transformed if the human being is to reach his goal of complete spiritual manhood.

The spiritual man is as different from the human as the human is different from the animal. It is an inner revolution that has to be effected. It is not merely growing more intellectual or more ethical or more emotional, but becoming quite different from what we happen to be. It is not a question of growing better, it is a question of becoming different altogether. A spiritual man is different from an ordinary human being. How do we attain this highest ideal for which a human being is intended? How can we grow into the fullness of our stature? "Be ye perfect even as your father in heaven is perfect." It is a call to growing perfection. It asks you to develop all your capacity so that you act no more from a self-centered standpoint, but you are rooted in the Supreme and do each one of your activities from that center. Then

the vicissitudes of life, the chances and changes which occur here do not hurt you, do not disturb your equanimity, because you are anchored in the Supreme. You are sure, whatever may happen, that in the sky the sun is shining even though clouds may shut it from our vision. You have that certainty of conviction. You have faith by which you live.

HOW CAN the intellectual man become the spiritual man? How can he grow into his highest fulfillment? All the scriptures of the world have told us that man has to practice meditation, worship, prayer, etc. The transmutation of your personality, the growth from the human to the spiritual is the call laid on every human being. Most of us leave this world without realizing what we are intended for. We think if we make a little money and a little name, and produce offspring, we have done our duty by the world. But the true man realizes that his consciousness should be merged, so to say, in that ocean of *sukha* and *samvit*, in that ocean of wisdom and joy.

He is called upon to cultivate the habit of solitary meditation. He has controlled all his senses, he has no petty, selfish desires, he does not want other people's possessions, etc. He alone has control, is devoid of petty, eager desires, and is non-greedy. It is easy to say, but to bring about that frame of mind is very difficult; but nothing can be reached which is not painful. If your goal is a severe one, your pathway is a difficult one. That is why Swamiji when he went to America said that he belonged to that ancient monastic order, the most ancient which was established in the Vedas, by which men got out of home and meditated in solitary places to get an idea of the Supreme. Loneliness is privation. It is deprivation. Most of us may live in a crowd

and may feel lonely. Solitude is quite different from loneliness.

In solitude, you have your Eternal Companion, the constant Presence, the perpetual presence of the Divine, *Yad yad karma karomi tad tad akhilam Shambho tava aradhanam* (while you are walking or sitting, while you are lying down, or while you are eating). If God is not everywhere, he is nowhere; and if we are not able to develop this habit of solitary meditation, then we will be really lonely in this world. If we develop it, we are able to reach the reality of the Supreme; then it is that we all will be happy in this world whether in company in a crowd or alone and in solitude. So what we are called upon to do is to develop that habit of solitary meditation. And whatever work you do from that point of view, you must do it in a sense of dedication.

We are called upon to practice *tapas*. Panini tells us that tapas is *alochana*, it is reflection; it is concentration on the meaning of life. Most of us think we are pursuing truth but are really far away from truth. If you go to any place, any crowd, the loose talks you have, the back-biting which you come across, the whispers and slanders uttered about other people, the personal adventurism, the attempt to rationalize your private ambitions into national purpose, trying to do whatever you prefer in the name of some truth, some ultimate objective—these are all deviations from the true methods of the search for truth. Everyone at every point in his life must ask himself whether he is honest to himself, whether he is trying to be true to the God who is located in each man's heart. He is there dwelling in each individual. Unless the human being is able to abstract from the world and get at that divine presence, whose presence is adequate for any kind of human predicament, you cannot say that you are really a servant of truth. It is, therefore, essential if you

want to develop any kind of spiritual value, that you must subject yourselves to considerable self-scrutiny. We deceive ourselves first and then deceive other people; and if we want to examine how far this self-deception has gone, it is possible for us to reach the truth only by constant self-scrutiny. That is the meaning of meditation. That is the meaning of alochana. That is the meaning of finding out that behind the panorama of this world there is a Supreme Mystery.

Mere intellectual learning, mere pedantry does not take you to God. Life eternal cannot be realized by knowing the meanings of texts, not by brain power, not by the study of many books; but you can learn the truth only by undergoing a churning of your mind, undergoing a laceration of your heart to get what may be regarded as a remaking of your whole nature. It is not easy. But it is possible for everyone to attain it. If some people have attained it, they are the heralds for the rest of humanity. They are the elder brothers, so to say, who tell us "what is possible for me is possible for you. I am not made differently. The same God who dwells in me dwells in you too." So it is that many metaphysicians and thinkers have searched for a vision of true greatness, a vision of good men, saints, etc. If their stories are listened to by young children, if they patiently go through their tales of woes overcome by attainment of joy, unconsciously the mind is molded. You will see that an impression is made. All influence is not deliberate, not conscious. It is more often unconscious than conscious.

By surrounding people, surrounding young children with examples of true saintliness and great goodness, you unconsciously permeate their minds, perfume them, color their minds with a desire for attaining similar positions, similar achievements. The child is an imitative being, first and foremost. Whatever you say it will do. If you put before it the

ideals of great character, not of military victory, not industrial power, not intellectual eminence, but true saintliness, people who have suffered for humanity, who have laid down their lives that other people may live—if that kind of idea is put before them, I have no doubt that the idea will have some kind of influence on the young people's minds. It is, therefore, necessary that in every school and in every home a little space must be left for the individual to be alone with himself, to examine himself. It is necessary for him to listen to the stories of the great saints and the sages of this world. That will make a tremendous impression. After all, the guru is one who removes your spiritual blindness. Otherwise he is not a guru; he is one who merely talks. He may pick up something and then say he is a pandit. It is not that. The Upanishads tell us that a brahmin should give up his pride in scholarship, his pride of learning, and become like a little child—a little child which is enfranchised, which is completely emancipated from any kind of pride, prejudice, or provinciality in religion or in any other matter. The little child does not believe in caste, it does not believe in its own religion; but we people indoctrinate the child, give him false ideas and make him behave as if he belongs to a superior category. All these we are responsible for; and if it is possible for you to give these people, our young children, the right ideals, they will grow into a world-consciousness, a consciousness where everybody is treated as God's creature, where you never look upon other people as inferior to you, but look upon them as your equals. That sense of equality is a necessary postulate of the reality of the Supreme. If there is a God in this world where all human beings form one family, that is the necessary result. And all the differences we tolerate, we have inherited; they are inconsistent with the reality of true religion.

ONLY yesterday I was saying that religion is either revolutionary or it is nothing. If it does not transform your society, if it does not transform your nature, if it does not bring about a human civilization, it is not true religion. Men like Swami Vivekananda preached religion like that. They taught us that God is not somewhere up in the sky, but he is in the heart of man. The Supreme is to be found in your own self, not in images, etc. Wherever you have *jiva* you have Shiva. Shiva means the in-dwelling divine in every human being. If we adopt such an attitude, we will not behave in the silly superstitious way in which most of us behave in this world today. We therefore must see to it that we rid our society of all the excrescences, the social evils, the inequities which we have imposed in the name of religion; they are a disgrace to the name of religion. Unless we are able to knock them out of our society, we cannot call ourselves truly religious beings. Cultivate your emotions and make them reach the aspect of love while they embrace the whole of humanity; cultivate your will so that every act that you do is done in a sense of dedication to the Supreme, making all people in this world God's people, making every man a prophet of God; and cultivate your intellect so that it becomes really illumined consciousness, to which the differences of intellect become subordinate.

These are the essential spiritual values. Freedom from fear, freedom from attachment, freedom from hatred. The three aspects, intellect, emotion, and will have to be transformed so as to express these great qualities of love, dedication, and abhaya—freedom from fear. Every institution can do it. It all depends on the way in which you teach your children.

In this *Vidyalaya*, where you are sustained by the great examples of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, it must be possible for you to generate that ampler air of

intellectual being, that simple business of living in accordance with the will of the Divine, identifying yourself with the Supreme, co-operating with the cosmic purpose, having no will, no preference, no like or dislike of your own. That is what we have to do, not adventurism, not mere going to temples and coming back, not the muttering of hymns, important as they may be—for the most important thing is to recognize that they are only aids for the development of the true spirit in man. I hope the example of the teacher, the vision of greatness, the habit of solitary meditation—all these things will be imbued in our children's minds at their most impressionable age, which is before they even go to school.

RELIGIOUS IDEALS IN THE TRAINING OF YOUTH

T. S. AVINASHILINGAM

TODAY, when man is discovering the secrets of nature and finding himself in the possession of large powers, the inculcation of spiritual values has become a vital question. Such powers when wisely used can prove a boon and a lasting benefit to humanity. But they will destroy the world if impelled by base material motives. Therefore we find great people in all lands stressing the cultivation of religious values. Educationists all over the world are exhorting people to create an educational system which will teach such values to our children, for it is in the homes and schools that their mental outlook is shaped.

In this connection it is good to remind ourselves that religion or spiritual life does not consist in following ceremonials or even in the mere study of scriptures. As Swami Vivekananda said, "We may study all the books in the world, yet we may not understand a word of religion or spiritual life. We may talk and reason all our life, but we shall not understand a word of truth until we experience it ourselves. We may be the most intellectual people the world ever saw and yet we may not come to God. On the other hand, irreligious men have been produced by the most intellectual training. It makes

men selfish and exploiting." But the cultivation of the heart takes one to the highest place, which intellect can never reach. It goes beyond the intellect and reaches what is called inspiration.

Gandhi also said: "It is not through books that one can impart training of the spirit. Just as physical training can be imparted only through physical exercise and intellectual training through intellectual exercise, even so the training of the spirit is possible only through the exercise of the spirit." Leading a life of the spirit, according to Gandhi, means the development of the highest character—shaping our lives on the basis of two fundamental principles, truth and nonviolence. By truth Gandhi meant not only truth in speech, but truth in thought and action. When asked how one realizes the truth, he replied, "By single-minded devotion *(abhyasa)* and indifference to all other interest *(vairagya)*. The quest of Truth involves *tapas*, self-suffering, even unto death." Gandhi proclaimed in the manner of the great scriptures of the world the need to follow a life of the highest purity. He said, "Brahmacharya [continence] is the source of all strength. A depraved man can never have the strength and the confidence to do anything great. This requires great watchfulness in our daily thoughts. Eternal watchfulness is the price that a seeker has to pay for leading a higher life."

Swami Vivekananda gave a new definition for religion when he said: "The old religions said he was an atheist who did not believe in God. The new religion says that he is the atheist who does not believe in himself. But it is not selfish faith. It means faith in all, because you are all. It is the great faith which will make the world better." The Swami fought against fanaticism and sectarianism of all kinds, and advocated acceptance of all religions as various paths leading to God. He proclaimed: "Let our watchword then be acceptance and

not exclusion. Not only toleration, for so-called toleration is often blasphemy. Toleration means that I think that you are wrong and I am just allowing you to live. Is it not blasphemy to think that you and I are allowing others to live? I accept all religions that were in the past and worship with them all. I worship God with every one of them, in whatever form they worship him. . . ."

REAL RELIGION and life of the spirit, therefore, can be acquired only by the cultivation of spiritual qualities. These qualities have been described in detail in the Bhagavad-Gita: "Fearlessness, purity of heart, steadfastness in knowledge and yoga; alms-giving, control of the senses, sacrifice, reading of the scriptures, austerity, uprightness; noninjury, absence of anger, renunciation, tranquillity, absence of calumny, compassion to all beings, uncovetousness, gentleness, modesty, absence of fickleness, boldness, forgiveness, fortitude, purity, absence of hatred, absence of pride; these belong to one born for a divine state." Of these, fearlessness is the first requisite of spirituality. Cowards can never be moral. Where there is fear there is no religion.

As Sorokin mentioned in his book, *The Ways and Power of Love,* unselfish love has enormous creative and therapeutic potentialities, far greater than most people think. Love is a life-giving force, necessary for physical, mental, and moral health. Altruistic persons live longer than egoistic individuals. Children deprived of love tend to become vitally, morally, and socially defective. Love is the most powerful antidote against criminal, morbid, and suicidal tendencies, and against hate and the fear of psychoneuroses. It is an indispensable condition for deep and lasting happiness. It is goodness and freedom at their loftiest. Without love, no military means, no

diplomatic machinations, no coercive police force, no school education, no economic or political measures can prevent the catastrophe of suicidal war. Only love can accomplish this miracle, provided, however, that we know well the nature of love and the efficient ways of its production, accumulation, and use.

Now it is necessary for us to examine the implications of love as they apply to our daily life in various situations. This means consideration and respect for others, noninjury, absence of anger, compassion for all beings, gentleness, noncovetousness, and sharing our possessions for the public good. In order to develop and maintain these qualities, one should develop a sense of discipline—not from fear of external punishment: the urge must come from within. These qualities should be observed not only in public but also in private, when no one is watching us. As Swami Vivekananda remarked, when a great work confronts us and there are thousands of people to admire, then even a coward or egoist may give his life in order to prove himself a great hero. But he who can perform the smallest act without letting anyone know about it, he is a true hero.

Let us be clear in our minds that the spiritual way of life is only for the strong and the brave. Let us be equally clear that it is only this way of life that can give man abiding joy. In this connection, I would like to recall what Swami Vivekananda said to the famous American agnostic, Mr. Ingersoll. This reputed atheist told the swami, "I believe in making the most out of the world, in squeezing the orange dry, because this world is all that we are sure of." To this the Swami replied, "I know a better way to squeeze the orange of this world than you do, and I get more out of it. I know I cannot die, so I am not in a hurry. I have no fear, so I enjoy squeezing. I can love all men and get thousandfold out of it."

How to instill these qualities in the children in our schools is the great question before us. Our educational system should be so adjusted and our school time so planned that, along with book learning, these qualities are also cultivated. It is accepted all over the world that mere presentation of intellectual knowledge is not the sole end of education. Real education should aim at creating proper attitudes. The examination system and the system of recognition should be so evolved that in addition to learning these qualities are also respected and evaluated. Celebration of festivals, sports, games, holding of daily prayers, the performance of daily duties, and a variety of other activities can be used for this purpose.

While considering this matter, it is necessary to remember the large part that the home and the family play in the shaping of the minds of our boys and girls. The human mind is like an iceberg, in which what is seen is but a small part; the part unseen and hidden below the water is the great portion giving direction to its movement. Even so, the impressions made in early childhood act as its background, affecting it for good and bad throughout life. Therefore, no educational system can be effective unless its objectives are shared by the parents and lived in the homes from which its children are drawn.

While the home is important, let us remember that the home is itself a part of a large family, namely, the community to which it belongs. Except for the few who dare to think independently, it is the community that sets the norms for the ordinary man and woman. Standards of conduct, integrity and character, habits of daily life, and even faith in spiritual values—these are all in a large measure guided and determined by social customs. Therefore, it is necessary for the inculcation of higher values that society be made aware of and accept these higher standards, and respect people who follow them.

While the education received in the homes and the community is essential, the schools have a peculiar and great responsibility in this matter. The educational system as a whole should accept these values as valuable and important. While the syllabus, curricula, and methods of teaching and examination are important, we should remember that it is the teacher who is most important in the inculcation of these qualities. If a teacher has faith in these values and applies them in his daily life, he succeeds in inspiring the children he is teaching. Swami Vivekananda said that "One should live from his very boyhood with one whose character is a blazing fire, and should have before him a living example of the highest teaching." Gandhi meant the same thing when he said: "The exercise of the spirit depends entirely on the life and character of the teacher. A cowardly teacher can never succeed in making his boys valiant, and a stranger to self-restraint can never teach his pupils the value of restraint." It is life that lights life; therefore, the living teacher is the most important element of any school.

These great ideas are easily stated, but difficult to apply. An educational system is great or poor according to the extent to which it is able to propagate these ideas. In this mighty task, we who have the privilege of following Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, and Mahatma Gandhi have a special responsibility. Ours is the great and sublime task of thinking deeply and finding ways and means by which these great qualities can be better cultivated and taught in our schools and colleges.

SOME GREAT DEVOTEES

CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD

The eighteenth chapter of a forthcoming book on Ramakrishna

BALARAM BOSE came of a rich family which had estates in Orissa and was noted for its piety and good works. From his youth, Balaram had lived chiefly in holy places, spending most of his time in meditation and privacy. He left the management of the family estates to a cousin and drew from them only a small income just sufficient for his needs. He belonged to the sect of the Vaishnavas—the devotees of Vishnu (God in the aspect of Preserver) and also of his incarnations as Rama, Krishna and Chaitanya. Balaram had married, as we saw in the last chapter, the sister of Baburam Ghosh, the future Swami Premananda. They had three children.

Balaram first heard about Ramakrishna through Keshab Sen's newspaper, and thus became eager to meet him. In 1882, when Balaram was in his late thirties, he had to go to Calcutta to be present at the wedding of his eldest daughter; he took this opportunity of visiting Dakshineswar. He arrived there on foot—this was typical of his unassuming way of life —to find Ramakrishna's room crowded with people; Keshab and a number of his Brahmo followers were there. Balaram did not introduce himself but sat down quietly in a corner of

Ramakrishna's room, remaining there until it was time for the others to go out and eat. Then Ramakrishna turned to Balaram and said, "is there anything you want to ask me?" "Yes, Sir. Does God really exist?" "Certainly he does," said Ramakrishna; but he added that God only reveals himself to the devotee who regards him as his nearest and dearest. Balaram asked, "then why can't *I* see him, when I pray to him so much?" Ramakrishna smiled. "Is he really as dear to you as your own children?" Balaram had to admit that he had never felt as strongly about God as all that. The next morning, Balaram returned to Dakshineswar. As before, he came on foot. Ramakrishna noticed this and was pleased.

During the rest of their association, Ramakrishna worked on Balaram to make him less strict and sectarian in his attitude toward conduct and ritual observances. As a Vaishnava, Balaram had been fanatically scrupulous in his practice of noninjury; he had even thought it wrong to kill the mosquitoes which disturbed his meditation. But when he had been for two or three years under Ramakrishna's influence, Balaram began to question his former scruples: surely, he said to himself, all that matters when you are meditating is to keep the mind fixed upon God? And how can you do that while you are being bitten? He decided to go to Ramakrishna and lay the problem before him.

On the way to Dakshineswar, Balaram continued his debate with himself. He now found that he could not remember ever having seen Ramakrishna kill mosquitoes; on the contrary, Ramakrishna had always seemed far more acutely sensitive to the suffering of others than anyone else he had known. Balaram remembered how once, when he and Ramakrishna were watching a man walking across a field of newly grown grass, Ramakrishna had actually winced with pain and exclaimed that he could feel the man's footsteps like

thumps on his own chest! So my question is answered, Balaram thought; I need not even ask it. Of course he will tell me to practice absolute nonviolence. Balaram decided to visit Ramakrishna, nevertheless.

When he arrived at Ramakrishna's room, he saw to his amazement that Ramakrishna was busy killing bedbugs! As Balaram approached and prostrated, he said in a matter-of-fact voice, "they've been breeding in the pillow. They bite me day and night, and keep me from sleeping. So I'm killing them." Thus was Balaram's question answered for him. Balaram remained convinced, however, that Ramakrishna had killed the bedbugs expressly for his benefit. For if, Balaram reasoned, the Master were in the habit of killing insects, I should certainly have surprised him at it before this, since I've been coming here unannounced at all hours of the day. The Master must have waited to teach me this lesson until he knew that I had sufficient faith in him to be able to learn it.

Shortly after Balaram's first meeting with Ramakrishna, Balaram's cousin had bought a house for him in the district of Baghbazar in Calcutta. The buying of this house was the outcome of a family plot to prevent Balaram from returning to live in Puri, where he had been staying for a while. To Balaram's father and cousin, Puri seemed dangerous because it was a sacred city; if Balaram were to stay there much longer, they feared that he might renounce the world and his wife and children. Balaram agreed to the move to Calcutta, although, at first, he felt unhappy there and longed to return to Puri. But later, as his devotion to Ramakrishna grew, he rejoiced in his new home. Not only could he visit Dakshineswar as often as he wished but he could have the privilege of entertaining Ramakrishna as his guest. During the next years, Ramakrishna and his followers would eat their midday meal at Balaram's house whenever they came into Calcutta; and

they went there also for religious festivals and evening parties. Balaram thus joined the fortunate company of the suppliers of Ramakrishna's wants, which had included Mathur, Shambhu Mallick and Suresh Chandra Mitra. Ramakrishna used to say, "the food Balaram serves is pure; it has been offered to the Lord who has been worshiped by the family for generations. I can eat the food Balaram gives me with pleasure; it goes down my throat of its own accord, as it were."

Ramakrishna would poke affectionate fun at Balaram's chief fault, which was—despite all his hospitality—a certain miserliness. M. quotes Ramakrishna as saying that, at Balaram's house, there were no proper instruments to accompany the singing. "Do you know how Balaram manages a festival? He's like a miserly brahmin raising a cow. The cow must eat very little, but it's expected to give milk in torrents. Sing your own songs and beat your own drums—that's Balaram's idea of a festival!" And again: "One day, Balaram hired a carriage for me from Calcutta to Dakshineswar. He said the carriage fare would be twelve annas. I said, 'surely the driver won't take me all the way to Dakshineswar for only twelve annas?' 'Oh, that'll be plenty,' he said. Before we'd got to Dakshineswar, one side of the carriage fell out. And, besides, the horse kept stopping. It simply refused to go. The driver would whip the horse and then he'd trot, but only a few steps."

Nevertheless, Ramakrishna would continually exclaim, "what a nice nature Balaram has! What devotion to God!" And M. describes how Balaram, while the devotees sat eating in his home, would stand watching them humbly, like a servant. No one would have dreamed that he was the master of the house.

TOWARD the end of 1883, Keshab Sen became gravely ill. His recovery was already almost despaired of when Ramakrishna

paid him what was to be the last visit, on November 28th.

M. relates how Ramakrishna arrived at the Lily Cottage, Keshab's home, with Rakhal, Latu and other devotees. He was received by Keshab's relatives, who took him upstairs to a veranda which opened out of the drawing room. Here they waited for Keshab to appear. Ramakrishna, knowing the seriousness of his condition, kept asking to be allowed to go in and see him. He wanted to spare Keshab unnecessary fatigue. But Keshab's disciples, acting no doubt in accordance with a misguided idea of politeness, insisted that Keshab would soon come out to receive his guest. One of them told Ramakrishna, "Keshab is now an altogether changed person. He talks to the Divine Mother just as you do, Sir." On hearing this, Ramakrishna went into samadhi.

They waited and waited. It grew dark outside. Lamps were lighted, and the party was requested to move into the drawing room. Ramakrishna was helped inside; only then did he begin to return to the pla of normal consciousness. Seeing the handsome furniture of the room all around him, he muttered to himself, "these things were necessary once—but what use are they now?" He recognized Rakhal, with seeming surprise, "Oh—are *you* here?" Then, as he sat down on a couch, his mood became ecstatic again. He talked to the Divine Mother, just as he had talked to Rakhal, "Mother—so you're here too! Why are you showing off in that gorgeous sari? Please sit down." Then, in an ecstatic soliloquy, he compared the body and soul to the shell and meat of a betel nut. When the betel nut is green, the two can hardly be separated; once it is ripe, separation becomes easy. The realization of God is like the moment when the nut becomes fully ripe. After this, body and soul are known to be separate.

Then, at last, Keshab entered the room. He was shock-

ingly changed; a mere skeleton covered with skin. He could scarcely stand and had to keep holding on to the wall for support. Meanwhile, Ramakrishna had left the couch and was sitting on the floor. With great difficulty, Keshab also sat down; he bowed and touched Ramakrishna's feet with his forehead. Then he took Ramakrishna's hand and stroked it gently. "I am here, Sir," he said.

After a while, Ramakrishna became conscious of his surroundings. He began to talk to Keshab. M. notes that at first Ramakrishna spoke only of God; he did not even inquire after Keshab's health. But at length he said, "Why are you sick? There's a reason. Many spiritual emotions have passed through your body. . . . I've seen big steamers going by, along the Ganges. While they're passing, you hardly notice anything. But, oh my goodness, what a tremendous noise there is, when the waves they make start to splash against the banks!"

Ramakrishna compared the process of acquiring the knowledge of God to a conflagration. He said, "The fire of knowledge first destroys the passions, then egotism; lastly it attacks the physical body." Then, changing the metaphor, he likened this process of acquiring knowledge to the treatment of a patient in hospital—saying that Keshab's physical illness was actually a sign of his spiritual transformation. "But," said Ramakrishna, "God won't release you as long as the least trace of your illness is left. As long as your illness isn't entirely cured, the doctor won't give you a permit to leave. Why did you register your name at the hospital at all?" Keshab thought this very funny and laughed again and again.

Later, Ramakrishna compared Keshab to the Basra rose, from which the gardener must clear away the soil down to its roots, in order that they may get as much moisture as possible from the dew. "Perhaps," he said, "that's why you too are

being exposed to the very roots. It may mean that you will do something great in the near future."

Ramakrishna then told Keshab how anxious he had been on a previous occasion when Keshab was sick; adding that, this time, he had been anxious only for two or three days and not to the same degree. This sounded reassuring; but, when Keshab's mother asked Ramakrishna to bless Keshab, he answered gravely, "what can *I* do? It is only God who can bless us all." He continued, "There are two things which make God laugh. He laughs when two brothers divide a piece of land between them. They draw a cord across the land and tell each other, 'this side's mine and that side's yours.' God laughs and says to himself, 'this whole universe is mine, and they take this little clod of it and say, this side's mine and that's yours!' God also laughs when a doctor says to a mother who's weeping because her child is mortally sick, 'don't be afraid, Mother—I shall cure your child.' The doctor does not understand that nobody can save that child if God wills it shall die."

When Ramakrishna had finished speaking, everyone fell silent. The aptness of his words was painfully obvious. Keshab was seized by a terrible fit of coughing. He coughed for a long time, while the others watched him, sad and powerless to help. The coughing left Keshab so exhausted that he could not talk any more. He bowed low before Ramakrishna and made his way slowly out of the room, supporting himself against the wall, as before.

In January 1884, Keshab died. When Ramakrishna heard the news, he was overwhelmed; he would not speak to anyone and remained in bed for three days. Later, he said, "when I heard of Keshab's death, I felt as if one of my limbs were paralyzed." And again, "Oh, how happy we used to be, together! How we used to sing and dance!"

Throughout the rest of his life, Ramakrishna would speak

often of Keshab—sometimes critically or humorously, but always with profound affection.

VERY SHORTLY after Keshab's death, Ramakrishna was walking in the garden at Dakshineswar when he passed into an ecstatic mood, fell and dislocated a bone in his left arm. M., who visited him a few days later, on February 2nd, tells how Ramakrishna addressed the Divine Mother like a reproachful child, "why did you do this to me, Mother? Just look at my arm—how badly it's hurt!" Turning to the devotees, he asked anxiously, "am I going to get all right again?" They reassured him as one reassures a child. . . . But, a few moments later, he was talking and laughing as if nothing had happened. And then he began teaching the devotees how to pray. Was he really suffering? Nobody could be sure. Even while the doctor was bandaging his arm, he laughed and joked.

ONE of Ramakrishna's most remarkable devotees was Nag Mahashay, a homeopathic physician. Nag Mahashay had made a reputation as a doctor in Calcutta before he met Ramakrishna, and he might easily have become wealthy if his code of ethics had not been so strict. From his poorer patients he would accept no fee at all; he would even help them with gifts of food and clothing. From the rich he would accept only his regular fee and the actual cost of the medicines. And in no case would he ask for money; the patient himself had to offer it.

But Nag Mahashay was not content with humanitarianism; he longed to realize God, and spent much time in meditation and religious discussion. A friend and fellow-devotee heard from the Brahmo Samaj of a great saint who was living

at the Dakshineswar temple. He told Nag Mahashay and the two of them went to visit Ramakrishna.

This visit led to others, and soon Nag Mahashay became convinced that Ramakrishna was not merely a great saint but incarnate God. Once, when they were alone, Ramakrishna said to him, "you're a doctor—please examine my feet and see what's the matter with them." Nag Mahashay examined his feet and could find nothing wrong with them. "Look again," Ramakrishna told him, "look more carefully." Nag Mahashay then realized that Ramakrishna was simply granting his unspoken wish, that he might touch these feet which he now regarded as holy. "There was no need to ask him for anything," Nag Mahashay said later. "He could read the minds of his devotees, and he gave them whatever they truly wanted."

Everything that Ramakrishna said, even in joke, Nag Mahashay took to be unqualified truth. On one visit, he heard Ramakrishna say to some devotees, "It's difficult for doctors, lawyers or brokers to make much progress toward God. . . . If the mind clings to tiny drops of medicine, how can it conceive of the Infinite?" That same evening, Nag Mahashay threw his medicine-chest and medical books into the Ganges, resolving to devote himself entirely to the spiritual life. He went to Ramakrishna and asked permission to become a monk. But Ramakrishna told him to remain a householder and keep his mind fixed on God. "Your life will become an example to all householders," Ramakrishna added.

Henceforward, Nag Mahashay and his wife lived lives of the most austere devotion. Ramakrishna had told them to stay at home and associate with holy men. When asked, "how shall I recognize a holy man?" he had answered, "they will come to you."

After Ramakrishna's death, Nag Mahashay and his wife

moved back to Deobhog, his native village in East Bengal, not far from Dacca. And here they made Ramakrishna's prophecy come true in the fullest possible sense, for they received *every* visitor to their home as a holy being, an embodiment of God. No service, no sacrifice was too great to insure the comfort of their guests. They had hardly any money. Nag himself ate barely enough to keep himself alive, and he was a chronic sufferer from colic. Nevertheless, he would never allow anyone to wait on him and he would never fail to provide food and hospitality. Once, when there was no fuel to cook for a guest, he cut down one of the wooden supports of his house. His humility was positively terrifying. Two young monks who came to see him were so embarrassed by the reverence with which Nag Mahashay treated them that they left as soon as possible. He insisted on going with them to the station. The train was crowded, and the other passengers were at first unwilling to let the monks board it. Seeing this, Nag Mahashay was so distressed that he uttered cries of agony and beat his forehead, until the passengers were ashamed and relented. On another occasion, when the house badly needed repair, Nag Mahashay's wife hired a carpenter; but Nag Mahashay refused to let the man work for them. He made him sit down, fanned him and prepared a pipe for him to smoke. When Nag Mahashay had to make a journey by boat, he would insist on doing the rowing himself. For this reason, people would avoid being in a boat with him.

Like Ramakrishna, Nag Mahashay was above all religious prejudice. He made no fundamental distinction between Hindus, Moslems and Christians. He would bow down in front of a mosque and utter the name of Jesus whenever he passed a church. After Ramakrishna's death, he returned to Dakshineswar several times, but he visited the Master's room only once; the experience was so painful for him that he

could not repeat it. Thereafter, he would salute the room from a distance and then withdraw. He would visit Sarada the Holy Mother and the monastery at Alambazar; but he would never consent to spend a night at the monastery. For Ramakrishna had told him to remain in the world, and he obeyed all the Master's directions to the letter.

When Nag Mahashay died, in December 1899, he was already revered as a saint throughout Bengal.

GIRISH CHANDRA GHOSH was born in 1844, in the district of Baghbazar, Calcutta. His parents both died when he was still very young. He got married soon afterwards, but the marriage did not stabilize his life. Girish had within himself powerful forces which were often in conflict: great talent as a dramatist, a songwriter and an actor, a devotional nature, a sceptical intelligence inspired by western ideas, and the sensuality of an unusually strong constitution. He had to earn his living by doing a succession of boring office jobs. His spare time became divided between writing, amateur acting, playing practical jokes, and various kinds of debauchery, violently indulged in for a while, abstained from with bitter pangs of conscience, and then returned to with equal violence. He was, in fact, a bohemian artist; a type already quite familiar to the big cities of nineteenth-century Europe but comparatively rare and therefore scandalous in Calcutta where the strict standards of the old Hindu society were still, despite foreign influences, honored in theory if not in practice.

In Girish's case, talent and debauchery gradually achieved a state of more or less workable coexistence; he continued to indulge his appetites but he also continued to write and act. In his thirties, he had already begun to be recognized as Bengal's modern pioneer of the drama. For centuries, Bengali

drama had been practically extinct. Now here was Girish, producing a vast body of dramatic work in the Bengali language; religious and historical verse-plays on the Shakespearian model and contemporary social plays in the current idiom. At the same time, Girish was training actors and actresses (who all adored him) to perform these plays and was taking part in them himself. Such was his versatility that he often played two or three different roles in the same drama. In 1883, the Star Theater was opened in Calcutta, with his money and under his direction. It became, in effect, the pioneer theater of modern Bengal.

Meanwhile, the conflict between two other forces in Girish's nature—his scepticism and his urge toward devotional religion—continued and could not be resolved. In an article written during his later life, Girish describes his state of mind before he met Ramakrishna:

> At such a crisis, I thought, "Does God exist? Does he listen to the prayers of man? Does he show him the way from darkness to light?" My mind said, "Yes." Immediately I closed my eyes and prayed, "Oh God, if thou art, carry me across. Give me refuge. I have none!". . . But I had nurtured doubt all these years. I had argued long, saying, "There is no God". . . . Again I fell victim to doubt. But I had not the courage to say boldly, "God does not exist."
>
> Everybody with whom I discussed my problem said unanimously that without instruction from a guru doubt would not go and nothing could be achieved in spiritual life. But my intellect refused to accept a human being as a guru.

The date of Girish's first encounter with Ramakrishna is uncertain. In any case, it was highly unsatisfactory. Girish had read in a newspaper that there was a paramahamsa who was living at Dakshineswar and that Keshab Sen was visiting

him frequently, with his disciples. Girish was sceptical of the enthusiasms of the Brahmo Samaj and he decided that this paramahamsa of theirs was probably a fake. However, when he was told that Ramakrishna was to visit the house of an attorney who lived in his neighborhood, he went there to see for himself. It was dusk, and lamps were being brought into the room. Yet Ramakrishna kept asking, "is it evening?" Girish had never before observed anyone in this superconscious state which so often made Ramakrishna unaware of his external surroundings. All Girish saw was this odd-looking man who asked, "is it evening?" while the lamps burned right in front of him. Not unnaturally, he was sceptical and contemptuous. What pretentious play-acting this is, he said to himself, and he left the house immediately.

Some years after this, in early September, 1884, Girish saw Ramakrishna again, at the house of Balaram Bose. This time, Girish was much more favorably impressed. He had expected that Ramakrishna would behave as a holy man was conventionally supposed to behave; that he would sit aloof in majestic silence. But now he saw Ramakrishna saluting the other guests with the utmost respect and humility, bowing his head to the ground. A dancing girl named Bidhu was seated at his side, singing devotional songs for him. One of Girish's old friends came up to him and whispered sneeringly that Ramakrishna and Bidhu must be lovers; that was why he was laughing and joking with her. Even at the time, this insinuation shocked Girish; he did not believe it could be true. But he had not yet become convinced that this was a real paramahamsa. When another of his friends, who was obviously not much impressed by Ramakrishna, said to him, "I've had enough of this—come on, let's go," Girish went with him. He had half-wanted to stay but was embarrassed to admit this, even to himself.

Only a few days after this, on September 21, 1884, Ramakrishna and some of the devotees visited the Star Theater, to see a play by Girish about the life of Chaitanya. Girish himself was strolling in the outer compound of the theater when a member of Ramakrishna's party came to him and said, "The Master has come to see your play. If you'll give him a free pass, that will be very kind; otherwise we'll buy him a ticket." Girish answered that Ramakrishna need not pay for his seat, but that the others would have to. He then went to greet Ramakrishna in person. But, before he could bow to Ramakrishna, Ramakrishna bowed to him. Every time Girish bowed, Ramakrishna bowed; until Girish, fearing that this might continue all evening, bowed mentally instead of physically, and led them all upstairs to a box. He then went home, as he was not feeling well. Thus Girish missed hearing Ramakrishna's delighted comments on the play and witnessing his frequent periods of ecstasy. When Ramakrishna was asked later how he had liked it, he answered, "I found the representation the same as the reality."

Three days later, Girish was sitting on the veranda of a friend's house when he saw Ramakrishna approaching along the street. They exchanged greetings. Girish felt a strong urge to join him, but did not. Then someone came to him with a message that Ramakrishna was asking for him. So Girish followed him into the house of Balaram, whom he was visiting. Ramakrishna was in a semi-conscious state. As if in answer to Girish's previous scepticism, he murmured, "no—this is not pretense; this is not pretense." Presently he returned to normal consciousness. Girish was always longing to find a guru, although, as we have seen, he obstinately refused to believe that any human being could stand in that relation to another. "What is a guru?" he now asked Ramakrishna. And Ramakrishna answered, "he is like a procurer.

A procurer arranges for the union of the lover with his mistress. In the same way, a guru arranges the meeting between the individual soul and his beloved, the Divine Spirit." Then he added, "you need not worry. Your guru has already been chosen."

The conversation turned to the theater. Ramakrishna told Girish, "I liked your play very much. The sun of knowledge has begun to shine on you. All the blemishes will be burned away from your heart. Very soon, devotion will come to sweeten your life with joy and peace." Girish could not bear what he regarded as such utterly unmerited praise. He told Ramakrishna bluntly that he had no good qualities, and that, anyhow, he had only written the play to make money. Ramakrishna passed over this reply in silence. "Could you take me to the theater and show me another of your plays?" he asked. "Any day you like," said Girish. "You must charge me something, though." "All right, you can pay eight annas." "That's the price of a wretched seat in the balcony. It's so noisy up there." "Oh, but you won't have to sit there. You'll sit where you sat last time." "Then you must accept one rupee." "Very well—if you want me to." After this playful exchange, Girish took his leave. A friend who accompanied him asked what he thought of Ramakrishna. "He is a great devotee," Girish answered. His heart was now full of joy. All his doubts and objections seemed to be dissolving; and he kept remembering how Ramakrishna had said, "your guru has already been chosen."

But Girish was a complicated person; a mixture of shyness, aggression, humility and arrogance. Although he had now begun to believe that Ramakrishna might really be the guru he was looking for, a part of his nature passionately resisted this idea. On December 14, Girish was in his dressing room at the Star Theater when a devotee came to tell him that

Ramakrishna had arrived in a carriage. "All right," Girish said, rather haughtily, "take him to the box and give him a seat." "But won't you come and receive him personally?" the devotee asked. "What does he need me for?" said Girish, with some annoyance. Nevertheless, he followed the devotee downstairs. At the sight of Ramakrishna's radiant face, Girish's mood changed; he was filled with shame for his rudeness. He not only escorted Ramakrishna upstairs but bowed down before him, touched his feet, and offered him a rose. Ramakrishna accepted it for a moment; then he handed it back to Girish saying lightly, "only a god or a dandy should have flowers. What am I to do with this?"

That day, the play was about the life of the Child Prahlada, a great devotee, who remained faithful to Vishnu, his chosen ideal, even though he was tortured for his devotion by his father, the demon Hiranyakashipu, who hated God. When Ramakrishna complimented Girish on his art as a dramatist, Girish answered modestly that he wrote without real authority, since he could never assimilate the truths that he taught in his plays. Ramakrishna disagreed, saying that no writer could create godlike characters, as Girish had, without having the love of God in his heart. Later, when Girish confessed that he felt inclined to give up the theater altogether, Ramakrishna told him that he must not do so, because his plays would teach people a great deal.

One night, while Girish was in a brothel with two of his friends, he felt a sudden desire to visit Ramakrishna. Despite the lateness of the hour, they took a carriage out to Dakshineswar. They were very drunk. Everyone at the Temple was asleep. But, when Girish and his friends came staggering into Ramakrishna's room, Ramakrishna received them joyfully. Going into ecstasy, he grasped both of Girish's hands and began to dance with him and sing. (This was only one of sev-

eral occasions on which Ramakrishna behaved in this way. The reeling of drunkards made him think of the state of ecstatic bliss, in which he himself would reel. Ramakrishna had been known to get down from a carriage to dance with drunken strangers on the roadside.)

Girish was not always so pleasant when drunk. Once, at the theater, he publicly abused Ramakrishna, using the coarsest and most brutal words. This turned nearly all of the devotees against him. Only Ramchandra Datta tried to defend Girish by saying to Ramakrishna, "Sir, he has worshiped you with his abuse, according to his nature. The serpent Kaliya asked Lord Krishna, 'Since you have given me poison, how can I offer you nectar?' " Ramakrishna seemed pleased by Ramchandra's argument, and said to the others, "you hear what Ramchandra says?" He then told them to get a carriage, because he wanted to go and visit Girish right away.

In actual fact, it seems unjust and a little absurd to compare Girish to a venomous snake. His wickedness has been much overrated. With the devotees who met him in later life, as an almost saintly old man, Girish liked to dwell on his previous sins in order to emphasize the transforming effect of Ramakrishna's grace. He would say melodramatically, "I have drunk so many bottles of wine, that if you were to place one bottle on top of another they would reach the height of Mount Everest." He certainly did drink a great deal and was apt to be violent and quarrelsome when drunk. He frequently visited brothels. He smoked opium for fifteen years before he met Ramakrishna. But there is no evidence to show that he was a seducer, or a cheat, or a hypocrite, or a spiteful slanderer, or capable of cold-blooded cruelty.

Meanwhile, Ramakrishna's influence was steadily gaining its hold upon Girish. One night, Girish drank himself into unconsciousness at the house of a prostitute. In the morning,

he hastened to visit Ramakrishna. He was full of remorse, but had not neglected to bring a bottle of wine with him in the carriage. On arriving at Dakshineswar, he made a tremendous scene of repentance, weeping and embracing Ramakrishna's feet. Then, suddenly, he felt in urgent need of a drink, and discovered, to his dismay, that the carriage had already driven off. But now Ramakrishna smilingly produced not only the bottle, but Girish's shoes and scarf as well; he had privately told a devotee to bring them from the carriage, before it left. Girish could not control himself; he drank shamelessly before them all—and, having done so, was again repentant. "Drink to your heart's content," Ramakrishna told him, "it won't be for much longer." Girish said later that this was the beginning of his abstention from intoxicating drinks. But the abstention was gradual; and this was certainly not the last time that Girish was drunk in Ramakrishna's presence.

Girish had a writer's scepticism about the authority of the written word; he knew only too well how easy it was for him to compose fine phrases. "I don't want advice," he once told Ramakrishna, "I have written cartloads of advice to others. It doesn't help me. Do something to transform my life." Ramakrishna was greatly pleased by this proof of Girish's faith in him. He told his nephew Ramlal to recite a verse from the Scriptures, "Go into solitude and shut yourself in a cave—peace is not there. Peace is where faith is. Faith is at the root of all things." Girish asked again if he should give up his work in the theater. Ramakrishna told him to continue it. He now treated Girish with fatherly affection, as though he were a little child, and often fed him sweets with his own hands.

Then, one day, Ramakrishna told Girish that he must remember God at least twice a day; once in the morning and once in the evening, no matter how much work he had to d

Girish agreed that this sounded simple enough. But then he reflected that his life was so disorganized, so busy, so much at the mercy of impulses and emergencies, that he did not even have fixed hours for eating or sleeping; how could he promise to remember God? He couldn't conscientiously do so. "Very well," said Ramakrishna, "then remember God just before you eat or sleep, no matter what time that is." But Girish would not make even such a promise. The truth was that any kind of self-discipline was repugnant to him. "In that case," said Ramakrishna, "you must give me your power of attorney. From this moment on, I'll take full responsibility for you. You won't have to do anything at all."

Girish was delighted. This was what he had been wanting all the time; to be rid of responsibility and guilt for ever. He agreed to Ramakrishna's suggestion and thought to himself, now I shall be as free as air.

But Girish was quite wrong—as he soon found out. He was not free, now; he had made himself Ramakrishna's slave. One day, when Girish happened to remark, about some altogether unimportant matter, "I shall do this," Ramakrishna corrected him, saying, "you mustn't talk in that dogmatic way; say—I shall do this if God wills." Henceforward, Girish tried to surrender his will altogether to Ramakrishna. In later years, he used to tell young devotees that the way of complete self-surrender in the religious life was actually much harder than the way of self-reliance and effort. "Look at me," he would add, "I'm not even free to breathe!" meaning that he felt that he could not perform any action of his will, without the help of the Lord.

Girish died in 1912, after many ups and downs of fortune; a nobly battered figure, steadfast to the end in his devotion to Ramakrishna. One curious result of their association is that, today, Ramakrishna's picture is to be found

hanging backstage in nearly every theater in Calcutta. The actors bow to it before they make their entrances. By giving his approval to Girish's art and encouraging him to continue practicing it, Ramakrishna became, as it were, the patron saint of the drama in Bengal.

AGHOREMANI DEVI was a brahmin. She had been widowed when still a young girl, and had settled down in the precincts of a Krishna temple at Kamarhati, about three miles along the Ganges north of Dakshineswar. She had been initiated by a guru who was a Vaishnava, and had devoted herself to the worship of Gopala, the baby Krishna. For this reason, she was usually known as Gopaler Ma, Gopala's Mother. She had been living this solitary pious life for thirty years.

Aghoremani probably visited Ramakrishna for the first time in 1884, with another woman devotee. A few days later, she returned alone, bringing some sandesh with her. She had been unable to get any fresh sandesh at the market, and this was stale; she had brought it only because she had nothing else, and custom demanded a formal offering when you visited a holy man. To her dismay, Ramakrishna actually wanted to eat the sandesh, and to her astonishment, he seemed to relish it. "I feel a great desire to eat food that has been cooked by you," he told her, and proceeded to name all the dishes he wished her to prepare for him. Aghoremani had practically no money and did not think she could possibly afford even these ordinary dishes. Besides, it shocked her deeply that Ramakrishna had said nothing about God and had talked only of food. She decided not to visit him again. But something drew her back to Dakshineswar, and this time she brought food she had cooked herself. It was nothing out of the ordinary, but Ramakrishna praised it extravagantly, exclaiming

that it was "nectar." As we have seen on so many other occasions, it was the cook that mattered to him, not the cooking; food prepared by the right hands could actually give him spiritual sustenance.

One morning, while Aghoremani was sitting meditating in her room at Kamarhati, she had a vision of Ramakrishna, with his right fist half clenched, in the traditional attitude of Gopala. She caught him by the hand. As she did so, Ramakrishna vanished and the figure of the ten-month-old Gopala appeared in his place and demanded to be fed. This baby figure seemed physically real to her. It climbed on her lap and on to her shoulders. Wild with joy, Aghoremani carried it all the way to Dakshineswar in her arms.

She entered the Dakshineswar compound looking like a madwoman, her hair disheveled, her wearing cloth trailing on the ground; "Gopala! Gopala!" she cried. She fed Ramakrishna with the food she had brought, and kept declaring that the baby was passing between them, now entering into his body, now returning to her lap. During the next few days, she had a continuous vision of Gopala, accompanying her as she went about her household duties, and sleeping with her at night. When next she saw Ramakrishna, he told her that she need not make japa any more, because she had attained "everything." But she continued to make japa for Gopala's sake; and Gopala became more and more closely identified with Ramakrishna in her mind. These visions continued to come to her for the next two months; then they became rarer. Ramakrishna said that, if she had gone on experiencing them, she could not have lived long. But Aghoremani was very sad because of Gopala's absence.

One day, Naren and Aghoremani happened to visit Dakshineswar at the same time. Ramakrishna always enjoyed confrontations of this kind. He urged Aghoremani to describe

her visions to Naren. She hesitated—for Ramakrishna had only recently warned her that one should never talk of spiritual experiences to others. But he smiled and told her to begin. So Aghoremani, in a voice choked with tears, began to describe how she first saw the baby Gopala. From time to time, she would break off and appeal to Naren, "my child, you are so learned and intelligent—and I'm poor and know nothing—please tell me truly, did these things happen, or did I only imagine them?" And Naren, despite his natural scepticism, was moved to tears. "No, Mother," he assured her, "what you have seen is all true."

After Ramakrishna's death, Aghoremani lived in retirement. Fifteen years later, three of Vivekananda's western disciples went to visit her at Kamarhati. One of these disciples was Nivedita. She wrote about the visit as follows:

> A few of us went, one full-moon night, to visit her. How beautiful was the Ganges, as the little boat crept on and on! And how beautiful seemed the long flight of steps rising out of the water and leading up, through its lofty bathing ghat, to where in a little room—built probably in the first place for some servant of the great house at its side—Gopala Ma had lived and told her beads for many a year. . . . Her bed was of stone, and her floor of stone, and the piece of matting she offered her guests to sit on, had to be taken down from a shelf and unrolled. The handful of parched rice and sugar candy that formed her only store and were all that she could give in hospitality were taken from an earthen pot that hung from the roof by a few cords. . . . On those beads, Gopala Ma had become a saint!

When Vivekananda was told of their visit, he said, "ah, that was the old India you saw—the India of prayers and tears, of vigils and fasts, that is passing away, never to return!"

In 1904, Aghoremani became seriously ill. They brought her into Calcutta, to the house of Balaram. Nivedita, who was fascinated by the old woman, begged her permission to nurse her. So Aghoremani moved in to live with Nivedita and remained there until July 1906. Then, when death was seen to be approaching, she was prepared for it according to the ancient custom, decked with flowers and garlands, and taken to lie beside the Ganges. She died two days later, aged about eighty-five.

THE POWER OF THE MIND

SWAMI GNANESWARANANDA

God, the great Sportsman, in a playful mood projects this universe out of himself. Then he arranges a game of blind-man's buff. He blindfolds every entity, whirls it around until its head begins to reel, and then sets it out to find and catch the "king." As soon as the player discovers the "king" and holds fast on to him he scores and is out of the game. Unless and until a player is able to discover God and cling tightly to him, he has to play. There is no way out!

With the human player perhaps the divine Trickster plays a great practical joke. He blindfolds man and whispers in his ear that it is not at all hard to catch hold of the "king" if the player is alert. Then he turns the player around and gives him a push towards the "nine gates" of the house which he has built for the human mind to live in. Let loose, the confused player rushes out through the gates to catch the "king." From the beginning of creation he has been seeking him, going in and out through the gates. The joke is that constantly he is hearing the soft whisper of the "king" which makes him ever hopeful of catching him, but every dart onward proves futile. Thus the game goes on. If one who knows the trick were asked to help the baffled player, what would he advise him? He would say: "He is at the back of your sight, hearing, smell, touch, taste, and thought. Turn around and catch him."

We, players in this eternal game, think that we shall

catch the "king" who is all life, knowledge, and happiness by owning and possessing sense objects, but none can find him objectively. The trick is a simple one and yet the hardest of all. Only a few get out. The rest go round and round. Simile apart, if we look within and analyze the psychological truth behind the activities of human consciousness we find that through the "nine gates" of the human body the mind is constantly rushing in and out to seek success, happiness, knowledge, and peace. No doubt in this process it occasionally catches a glimpse of satisfaction, but experiences with the external world only increase its hunger and restlessness. As the result of long experience it eventually learns the lesson of turning around and getting hold of the source of eternal satisfaction, in the inner divine Self. In fact, the most beneficial, interesting and uplifting study for man is his own mind, but how many of us think it worth our while to study the inner being, as to what it is, how it works, and so forth? Modern life, especially, emphasizes phenomena. We are taught constantly to push the mind out of its home, through the gates, scattering it in the form of objects. That is the reason it has lost its subjective power and is wandering like a vagabond over the face of the earth, knowing little, possessing nothing, always discontented and ever weary. The irony lies in the fact that it carries at its back the infinite storehouse of divine perfection. Those who have understood this truth, those who have been convinced that the end and the goal of the journey of life can be realized within one's own being, at once turn within to study, analyze, control, and cultivate the power of the mind.

Very little about the human mind was known by Western scholars until very recently. Even today, in my opinion, their knowledge of the inner man is insufficient, because in their study of subjective man they have applied the same method

as they apply to the study of objective nature. Suppose I want to know all about this lamp, which is beside me. I let my consciousness flow towards this object of my study and branch out in a hundred different concepts, bringing me eventually some knowledge regarding the lamp, but can this be done in regard to the study of human consciousness, which is the subject, the *one that studies*? Can you make the subject the object of your study? The method that has been applied by Western psychologists for the study of human consciousness has been one of inference and synthetic generalization. Physicians, psychologists, and psychiatrists have recorded the detailed history of mental cases of different natures, juvenile and adult, normal and abnormal, and have formed a few hypotheses regarding the laws which regulate the human psyche. This is the empirical method, in which the mind of the scientist, as the subject, is projected upon the changes and reactions that appear on the surface of the consciousness of other minds which form the object of his study. This method is sufficient to know the qualitative and quantitative reaction of any object but not its substantive reality. The question is: How to know the Knower of knowledge?

Thousands of years ago in the Upanishads the rishis declared the futility of the empirical method as a means to know the Knower. To gain the knowledge of the inner reality of man the subjective method of introspection and meditation was prescribed by the Hindu sages. In other words, the outflow of the mind must be checked and controlled; all objective images and ideas must be carefully eliminated. Then the Knower will reveal himself, like the sun revealing itself on the surface of a lake when it is clear and calm. As long as the outflow continues man must wander, seeking, always seeking, but knowing very little of the divine Spirit which he is constantly carrying within him. Some day he must wake up

and stand alone, detached from the entangling fascination of objects and declare: "I have searched every object but I have got nothing but mockery and ridicule. Now I am going to turn around and find the truth within me." Unless and until this change of understanding is attained, it will be impossible to gain knowledge of the Reality of man.

WHAT is our conception of the human mind? Some years ago science dogmatically declared that consciousness was nothing but the result of a certain combination of some of the brain cells, and that the brain cells secrete thought as the liver secretes bile. A few among the modern psychologists have changed their conception of consciousness. By analysis they have come to the conclusion that the mind is the all in all of the human organism, but they admit they do not know what it is. Until recently if you said that diseases could be caused by mental conditions you would have been ridiculed, but today psychologists and psychiatrists have laid bare the fact that it is the mind which directly controls almost everything in the human system. It has been found that even one's physical appearance is determined to a large extent by the nature and reactions of the mind. Thus, psychology and psychiatry endeavor to heal man by analysis, suggestion, and such other mental means. That is very good, but does it open up any further avenues of constructive ideas and endeavor? Western psychiatry studies the process of cure for a diseased mind, but it does not prescribe any method for the culture and further development of a normal mind. Hindu mysticism goes deeper. It prescribes a scientific method for the unfoldment of divine perfection which is inherent in human consciousness. It holds that the mind is a ray, a distorted ray, of the divine Light which is the basic reality behind our consciousness. It is a potential God. When I use this ex-

pression, God, you should not think of any concrete Deity. It is omnipotent, all-pervading Power. Thus the home of infinite perfection is your consciousness, in its pristine nature. When it is not agitated by any disturbance or image-making functioning, when it stands in its own intrinsic glory uninterfered with by any external influence, it is God. It is omnipotent, omniscient, and immortal.

As you are listening to my words, what are you doing? Perhaps you are thinking and forming concepts in your mind. Who is at the back of this process? Let me say that it is the power of God which is manufacturing these thought-images, according to the caliber and capacity of your senses, and the power of your understanding. Your thought-images are made of the stuff of God. They are like images that can be made and unmade out of soft clay. If you want to realize God you must eliminate the illusory conditions of name and form through which God expresses himself in the form of your concepts. Your thought is God manifest, just as the images you make out of clay are clay manifest. The reason you do not recognize the absolute perfection of God in your concepts is that you are distorting that perfection by the limitation of your senses. Let me give you another illustration. You are seeing a moving-picture show. You look at the phenomena appearing and disappearing and enjoy infinite variety of name and form on that small screen. What are these forms made of? What is the basic reality behind them? You designate these forms by so many names; you see men, women, animals, saints, villains, oceans, sun, moon, and everything on that small screen. What are they all made of? There is only one substance which creates the illusion of the many. It is light and light alone which is; everything else there has its existence only in the ultimate substance of light. One ray projects itself through various qualifying media, presenting

before you a veritable cosmos of name and form. How has the light been modulated to create such phenomena? It has passed through a film which again contains different grades and shades of light, thus creating the illusion of a realistic universe of images and figures on the screen. A similar thing is going on in man. Pure consciousness, or *Chit*, is the intrinsic ray of God. Our ego and senses are the film. The universe of concepts and forms appears and disappears on the screen of absolute Existence, or *Sat*. When the light of God passes through the "film" it appears to be influenced by the condition of the senses. The picture is not God as he really is, but it is God just the same. It is God appearing distorted, God appearing qualified by the qualities of the senses.

Why can we not form a clear conception of our consciousness free from any limiting condition imposed upon it? Because we allow our minds to be disturbed by constant stimuli from the external world. Suppose you are trying to see a marine garden. If the water is unclean or agitated, how can you expect to see it? Your consciousness is the pool of water which contains the marine garden of the bliss of God. If you could keep the water transparent and unagitated you would experience the bliss of God. What a pity that we always keep our consciousness exposed to so much external stimuli—the storm and tempest, the dust and dirt of worldly contacts, thoughts, and memories. That is why, although perfection is within us, we cannot realize it. Now, what method are we to adopt for the attainment of that perfection? The method is very simple to state: Learn the art of keeping the "lake" of your mind transparent and calm. Do not allow dust and dirt to accumulate and float on it and divine glory will reflect through the water. It will bring new revelations even to your daily contacts and experiences.

So, my friends, the first and most fundamental truth I would like to present to you from the treasure house of Hindu philosophy is that your consciousness is not the effect of anything material. Your mind is a ray of the light of God. Your consciousness is God. You are God. If you will only cleanse your mind and cultivate its inner potential power, you will see God—nay, you will be God. You do not have to seek anywhere else to find God. God, according to this philosophy, is not a person or an object; it is a Principle, a Power which pervades everything. There cannot be any mind in this universe, no matter how perverted it may seem to be, that does not have the light of God as its fundamental essence. It is God who acts, talks, feels, and does everything else through us all. The human mind is nothing but consolidated God. Through our thoughts and feelings God reveals in a distorted form, qualified by the qualities of the "film" through which the divine Power has to travel. Do you realize the gravity of this message? First of all, understand this one truth clearly: You are the Divine. Know it, not as an allegory but as the most vivid of all truths. What you call life with its acts, thoughts, and feelings is nothing but God, expressing itself through so many limiting conditions, or *upadhis,* as light produces varieties of forms on the screen.

Does this give you any hope or encouragement, any practical suggestion as to how to improve your life? If you do not think seriously about these things, but merely hear them and continue to live the same old life, no amount of wisdom will do you any good. In India it is believed that the river Ganges is the kindness of God and that bathing in it washes away all imperfections. A man once asked the question of Sri Ramakrishna: "Is it true that the Ganges' water washes away all imperfections?" He answered: "Certainly, it is true." "But," objected the man, "millions bathe there and

they are just as imperfect as before." Sri Ramakrishna's humorous but significant reply was: "As the bather approaches the Ganges the devil within, in the form of imperfection, becomes frightened, leaves him, and waits on the branch of a nearby tree. The bather takes his bath and is purified, but as soon as he comes out of the water the devil descends upon his shoulder again!" Many are occasionally stimulated and uplifted by words of wisdom and the consciousness seems to be cleansed and purified, but the trouble is, the old devil is waiting around the corner! If you wish to derive practical benefit from your knowledge you must practice it and make it part of your life.

It is a pity that we pay so much attention to externals. Take statistics of how much energy, time, and money are spent to take care of the physical body and compare them with what is spent for the improvement of the mind: you will be horrified to know that you have been neglecting the most important member of your organism. I wish there were "beauty shops" for the mind! You all know that if the body is not maintained in perfect order it will jeopardize your enjoyment of the world, but do you realize how much more important is the well-being of the inner man? We have given very little consideration to the health and embellishment of the inner self. Very little, if any at all. If you want to live a spiritual life (or even if you just want to enjoy life more fully), you cannot neglect the most important part of the machinery. The body is not to be neglected. It is a wonderful instrument, but one should not allow the main dynamo of the machine to become rusted and out of order. It is time that modern man pays at least equal attention to the nourishment, hygiene, exercise, and rest of the mind as he does to the body.

Let me draw a parallelism: What do you do to keep the physical body in good condition? Firstly, you give it food.

You know that if the body does not get proper nourishment it becomes weak and creates obstructions to your happiness. Good food is not all. You keep it in a healthy environment and protect it from damaging external influences. How careful you are that the things you use are sterilized and not infected by germs. Thus, the second requisite for your physical well-being is the observance of hygiene. Thirdly, you exercise your body and give it enough rest and recreation. Thus, roughly, you give four kinds of attention to your body: Food, hygiene, exercise, and rest. Now, could not the other set of machinery, the mind, demand the same attention from you? Do you give it the food it is hungry for? You refuse to give it its nourishment, so it picks up the crumbs from under the table and as a result it gets weak and diseased. Because it is made of the stuff of immortality it does not die of starvation! Will you adjust your budget so you can daily give some food to the mind? Your cabinet is full of stuff to cleanse your body with, but you should have something equally handy to disinfect the mind. The difficulty is that you cannot buy your "mind-wash" in bottles; you have to prepare it in your own laboratory. Do you give proper exercise to the mind? You may say: "Oh, yes; it is hard to stop it from exercising itself." Do you call it exercise if you are dragged by someone with a rope tied around your neck? Many ropes have been fastened to the poor mind by your various senses and faculties. They pull it incessantly from every direction, almost inflicting the agony of strangulation upon it. Unharness the mind from the yoke of the senses and let it have exercise for its own benefit. When the mind has lost its own status and works like a slave for the senses, there is no chance for it to have any rest. It is made to work, by the stimulation of the senses, even in the state of sleep, while the senses are enjoying their rest. It is only in deep, dreamless sleep that the mind has any freedom from the

senses. Rest for the mind means consciously freeing it from the activities and stimulation of the faculties and senses.

HINDU PHILOSOPHY teaches that the power of the mind is equal to the power of God, and it prescribes practical methods for the unfoldment of this divine power. When I say that anything that God can do the mind can do, you may think me demented. Nevertheless, it is a fact, because that one omniscient Principle, God, is the background of your consciousness. That explains many things—miracles, clairvoyance, healing, and other demonstrations of mental and spiritual power. By steady exercise great powers come to the mind. The scattered mind is like a drunken monkey; whereas concentrated consciousness is God. Just think of it!

Daily exercise in meditation is necessary to control the scattered rays of the mind. Under ordinary circumstances the mind is scattered all over the fields of your experience and is not capable of resting for two seconds on one concept. Try to meditate on anything, say, a lotus flower. You will find how your mind will go on from the flower to the place where you once saw a lotus, or where you heard of one, and then to the people who were with you at the time, and so on. An untrained mind proves to be the target for incessant shots from the machine gun of hidden stimuli. Keeping the mind above the influence of stimuli, bringing it back again and again to the object of concentration, I call exercise for the mind. Shutting the spiritual medium through which different stimuli are agitating the mind I call meditation. When that has been accomplished your consciousness stays in its own intrinsic form, above all limiting conditions. The consciousness is then free from all qualities. Such a state of mind is divine consciousness, but it takes time to advance so far. However, what each one of us can do, to begin with (and with a good deal

of benefit to ourselves) is to give a daily "wash" to the mind so that it gradually gets rid of the dirt which brings disease germs to the inner self. That is not so difficult to do if you understand the principle and consider the attainment of it life's greatest good. Sincerity is necessary. Sincerity and perseverance. If you start upon the path with sincerity guidance will come, either from within yourself or from outside.

Before I close, let me sound a note of warning. If you think, guided by a casual fancy, that you will attain to that state of divine consciousness by a clever trick, you will be disappointed. It is only the "professional," one whose life is lived for that one main objective, who will attain the goal. The curious amateur will be disillusioned in a few days. Apropos of this, a story was told by Sri Ramakrishna: A city school teacher took a fancy to become a farmer. He thought that it would be wonderful to live close to nature, hear the songs of birds, and make his living directly from the bosom of Mother Earth. So he resigned his post in the city and bought a farm. He could not raise a crop the first year as he was absolutely ignorant of farming methods. The second year there was a flood which washed away the little he was able to raise. The third year there was a drought which burnt all the plants. With all his savings gone the disillusioned school teacher was back looking for a job again!

A farmer who is one by profession cannot quit, whether there is flood or drought or cyclone, and so he gains his end. If you are a spiritual "farmer-by-profession" you cannot set your mind to anything else and you will succeed in the end, but if you are just an amateur of fancy, dabbling in it for the thrill of something new, you will lose interest in a short time and will go back to your old life again.

RECOLLECTIONS OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

WILLIAM ERNEST HOCKING

NOTHING that is real is inert. If "inertia" is the defining quality of matter—as was once thought—matter could certainly not be the basic reality of the world. The being of a person is far from inert: it is something active even when the person is "in repose," creating a sort of dynamic field. To *be*, as a living self, is to be charged with an outgoing energy wholly independent of effort—to be is to act.

And there are persons with whom one is peculiarly aware of this quiet radiation. To be in their presence for even a brief time may leave a lasting impression. We all carry about with us unsolved problems of adjustment to this many-angled world—without formulating questions, we are living *quests*, unless by some rare chance our philosophy of life is entirely settled. And to meet some person may resolve a quest wholly without his knowledge; it may be simply his *mode of being* that brings the release.

This was in some measure the story of my first encounter with Swami Vivekananda, though I was only one of an immense audience. In connection with the World's Fair in Chicago during the summer of 1893, there was held a "Parliament of Religions." I was a casual visitor at the Fair, just turning twenty, interested in a dozen exhibits on the Midway, enthused by the marvelous architecture of Richard Burnham

about the Lagoon, but also with special hopes related to the new university near by, whose doors had been opened in '91 —I was planning for five minutes with President Harper at his roll-top desk in Cobb Hall. But aside from all this, I had a quietly rankling problem of my own.

I had been reading Herbert Spencer, all I could get of his works. Spencer's "First Principles" had effected an inner revolution in my way of thinking. I was convinced by him; by his arguments for evolution and for a definite rejection of the pretense of belief about things that cannot be known; this new vista was an intellectual victory, but it was somehow a vital injury to think of man as of the animals—birth, growth, mating, death—and nothing more—finis. I had had my religion—Methodism—an experience of conversion with a strange enlightenment which gave me three days of what felt like a new vision of things, strangely lifted up; Spencer had explained that all away as an emotional flurry—the world must be faced with a steady objective eye. The Christian cosmology was fancy.

But still, Christianity was not the only religion. There were to be speakers from other traditions. They might have some insight that would relieve the tension. I would go for an hour and listen. I didn't know the program. It happened to be Vivekananda's period.

The speaker came forward with a calm authority but also with a fraternal at home-ness: "Sisters and Brothers of America . . ." In an instant the immense audience was responding with a thunderous physical wave of greeting and recognition of the accent of inner assurance. He spoke not as arguing from a tradition, or from a book, but as from an experience and certitude of his own. I do not recall the steps of his address. But there was a passage toward the end, in which I can still hear the ring of his voice, and feel the silence

of the crowd—almost as if shocked. The audience was well-mixed, but could be taken as one in assuming that there had been a "Fall of man" resulting in a state of "original sin," such that "All men have sinned and come short of the glory of God." But what is the speaker saying? I hear his emphatic rebuke:

"Call men sinners??—
It is a SIN to call men sinners!"

The way for the essential message was thus perfectly prepared; the main obstacle was identified and attacked with an exact aim and power; through the silence I felt something like a gasp running through the hall as the audience waited for the affirmation which must follow this blow. What his following words were, I cannot recall with the same verbal clarity: they carried the message that in all men there is that divine essence, undivided and eternal: reality is One, and that One, which is Brahman, constitutes the central being of each one of us.

For me, this doctrine was a startling departure from anything which my scientific psychology could then recognize. One must live with these ideas and consider how one's inner experience could entertain them. But what I could feel and understand was that this man was speaking from what he *knew*, not from what he had been told. He was well aware of the books; but he was more immediately aware of his own experience and his own status in the world; and what he said would have to be taken into account in any final world-view. I began to realize that Spencer could not be allowed the last word. And furthermore, that this religious experience of mine, which Spencer would dismiss as a psychological flurry, was very akin to the grounds of Vivekananda's own certitude.

For several years I lost sight of Vivekananda. My pursuit of learning—since the panic of '93 wiped out my earnings—led me to do my first college work in Iowa rather than Chicago, as a student of engineering. Then, encountering a work of William James, which further disenchanted me with Spencer, I spent four years in Davenport, earning money to come East and study with James. During those years, Vivekananda had begun his great work of founding centers for the Vedanta throughout America. In the course of this work he came to Cambridge. I heard him twice: once in a class in metaphysics, and once at the home of Mrs. Ole Bull on Brattle Street. It was in these informal gatherings that the quality of the man most directly spoke, and I was confirmed in my regard, and my purpose to re-think my philosophical foundations. My work with Royce, as well as with James, Palmer, Dickinson Miller, and others of the great Department at the turn of the century, gave me the mental tools for conceiving a world-unity in terms of spirit, rather than in terms of a redistribution of matter and motion. Deussen's writings on the Vedanta, and James Woods' reports of his years in India, were of further help in this direction—especially, let me say, my conversation with Woods over his translation of the Yoga of Patanjali and his own experiences in that field.

All of these experiences naturally made the idea of a journey to India an attractive dream, without the slightest foundation in likelihood. But the time came for its unexpected realization, in connection with a certain "Laymen's Inquiry" which took me, 1931 and '32, first to London, where I met Gandhi in connection with the Round Table Conference, and then found myself in the Calcutta neighborhood, visiting among other places the Belur Math, where Josephine MacLeod and Frances Leggett had helped to promote the great

training place for followers of the Ramakrishna movement. It was like returning to the rootage after many excursions in the fruitage. Tantine had in the meantime become a warm personal friend; and in those sacred precincts my wife and I found ourselves very much at home.

It was during this visit to India that I first met Radhakrishnan and Jawaharlal Nehru and the Poet Rabindranath Tagore, at Santiniketan—and there also Kshiti Mohan Sen the collector of marvelous Baul poetry, and Surendra Nath Das Gupta in Calcutta, a great historian of Vedanta. These unfading friendships and the continuing associations with the Vedanta centers near us in America, and especially with Tantine, while she lived, have helped to keep the memory and the spirit of Swami Vivekananda alive in our own lives.

And I must not neglect to mention the marvelous sculptures of Malvina Hoffman, figures of Ramakrishna as the vital center, of the "Holy Mother of India," and of Vivekananda, in which by the miracle of the great artist, in the permanent silence of alabaster and bronze the life of these life-givers continues to speak.

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

DR. SARVEPALLI RADHAKRISHNAN, India's great philosopher and statesman, inaugurated the Seminar on Spiritual Values in Education at the Sri Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya in Coimbatore on March 31, 1963. The Vidyalaya consists of several schools and colleges, a rural institute, an industrial section, and a dispensary. T. S. AVINASHILINGAM, its founder-head, also serves as a Member of Parliament.

The late SWAMI GNANESWARANANDA established the Vedanta center in Chicago in 1930. His lecture on "The Power of the Mind," delivered in 1936, was made available for publication in *Vedanta and the West* through the courtesy of Mallika Gupta.

WILLIAM ERNEST HOCKING, Alford Professor Emeritus, Harvard University has lived for more than thirty years in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, where he owns 670 acres. He grows most of his own food, has his own herd of cattle, and spends most of his day writing. His current project is a book on *The Philosophy of Law*.

At one time (when I was not living up to my ideals very well) I conceived the idea that I was being intrigued against. Out of a few coincidences I "discovered" a plot, aimed at me. Later, when I got hold of myself, I found there had been nothing to it. But for the time being I had been on the borderline of paranoia. This scared me and showed me how easy it is to "go off" if one gets bound up in himself.

Freud's harm was not in his stress on sex. His offense was that he introduced the new idea—or rather put forward the old idea with apparent scientific endorsement—that self-expression is my right and privilege. Indeed, I will be sick if I do not indulge myself.

If it is a fact that the more I think of myself the worse my mental health, conversely it must be true that the less self-concern I have the better off I will be mentally.

This must be what Swamiji had in mind, for sacrifice is the basis of the old Hindu morality. The duty of the householder is to give up his life (that is, personal motives) for others: wife, children, community. The duty of the monk is the same, but greater. His duty is to give up his life for God and all mankind.

When we forget ourselves we are mentally healthy and inwardly happy. Is there anyone more ecstatic than the hero, whose attention is centered on the well-being of another? Each of us has experienced the delight that comes when we take some action that is utterly selfless.

I know all this; let me practice it. Let me cultivate the habit of sacrificing myself every day. Let me think I am doing it for others or for God. In the final analysis, though, I am doing it only for myself. The Western spirit is materialistic, as Swamiji said. But Westerners can also be utilitarian; and nothing is more utilitarian for one's own eventual benefit than self-forgetfulness.

Vedanta and the West

Vedanta teaches that man's real nature is divine; that it is the aim of man's life to unfold and manifest this divinity; and that truth is universal. Vedanta accepts all the religions of the world and reveres the great prophets, teachers, and sons of God, because it recognizes the same divine inspiration in all.

STUDENT'S NOTEBOOK No. 26

Swami Vivekananda once remarked that if the Western people did not tone down their passion for material satisfactions they would turn into a "nation of idiots."

But the pursuit of personal gratification has not diminished, and Swamiji's prediction seems on the verge of coming true. Mental illness is a gigantic problem in Europe and the United States.

Why? It seems to me that there is a correlation between self-concern and mental health—between ego and psychological well-being. The more self-concern, the less mentally healthy I am; the more my ego asserts itself, the more abnormal I will be. The wisdom of our language is revealed in the term "insane with jealousy." The psychotic, we know, is totally bound up in himself. For him no one else exists. "I am Napoleon." "They are doing bad things to me." "I am right; all the others are wrong."

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CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD
The Last Year

SWAMI SARADANANDA
The Sympathy for Religions

SWAMI SATPRAKASHANANDA
The Last Message of Sri Krishna

DORINE SHEPHERD
What Vedanta Means to Me



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C O N T E N T S

THE LAST YEAR

CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD

The twentieth chapter of a forthcoming book on Ramakrishna

THE EARLY PART of 1885 was unusually hot. Since Ramakrishna suffered from the heat, the devotees suggested that he should suck pieces of ice and put ice in his sugared drinks. He became very fond of ice. However, when, toward the end of April, he began to complain of a pain in his throat, the devotees blamed the ice, and themselves.

The pain was caused by a sore, which did not yield to treatment but grew gradually worse. The doctor advised Ramakrishna not to talk more than was absolutely necessary and to avoid, if he possibly could, going into samadhi. In samadhi the blood rushes to the throat, and the doctor feared that this would aggravate Ramakrishna's condition.

In May, the Vaishnavas held an annual festival at the village of Panihati, on the bank of the Ganges, a few miles upriver from Dakshineswar. The festival commemorated an occasion on which Sri Nityananda, the chief disciple of Sri Chaitanya, was entertained at a feast in this same village by Raghunath, a householder devotee. Nityananda encouraged Raghunath to persevere in begging Chaitanya's permission to renounce the world and become a monk.

Ramakrishna had attended the Panihati festival many times already; but this year he wanted to take his young disciples, who had never seen it. When objections were made to this expedition because of his illness, he brushed them aside,

saying that he would only stay an hour or two and that he would be careful not to go into samadhi. It was agreed that he must not take part in the *kirtan,* the singing of holy songs, as this invariably threw him into ecstasy.

After visiting the home of a wealthy landowner and resting there for a little while, Ramakrishna and his party went to watch the dancing and singing in the courtyard of the Radhakanta Temple. As they stood there, a man dressed as a Vaishnava began to dance and shout in an apparently ecstatic state. Ramakrishna knew him at once for an impostor. Smiling indulgently, he whispered to Naren, "what a fake!" He seemed to be observing the scene objectively, with perfectly controlled emotions; and the young disciples felt reassured. But the very next moment, before any of them could stop him, he bounded down into the midst of the dancers and went into samadhi. The disciples could do nothing but crowd around and watch. Sarat (Saradananda), who was present, describes how Ramakrishna then regained partial outer consciousness and started dancing with a power and beauty such as the boys had never seen before. Sometimes, says Saradananda, he strode like a lion; sometimes he moved like a fish swimming in a sea of ecstasy. His body was so flexible that one could not believe it contained hard bones; the music seemed to pass through it in visible waves.

In about half an hour, Ramakrishna began to come to himself, and the disciples urged him to leave the kirtan party and start for home, after first paying homage to some sacred images which were lodged in a nearby shrine. Ramakrishna agreed; but, as they left the temple, the kirtan players, who had no idea that he was ailing, followed them, still singing their songs. Ramakrishna therefore kept stopping and going into samadhi and their progress was very slow. All of them witnessed, that day, the phenomenon which has already been

referred to in this story. Saradananda says that Ramakrishna's figure appeared to grow taller and become luminous, "like a body seen in a dream." His skin was much lighter than usual and actually shone; it seemed to blend with the bright ocher color of his silk wearing-cloth so that he looked as if enclosed in flames. The kirtan players were amazed and enraptured. They started to sing a hymn to Nitai (Nityananda), making the words refer to Ramakrishna himself.

It seems that our Nitai, the love-giver, is here!
Here comes our Nitai, bringing divine love!
Without him, how could our heart's longing be appeased?
Here is our Nitai, the love-giver!

Again and again, pointing their fingers at Ramakrishna, they sang, "here is our love-giver!" Other kirtan parties joined in the singing, and soon nearly all of the devotees who had come to the festival surrounded Ramakrishna in a vast excited throng.

An ugly twisted man in the garb of a wandering monk snatched a plate of prasad from a woman devotee and with his own hand put some of the food into Ramakrishna's mouth. Ramakrishna did not resist, being in samadhi; but, as soon as he was touched, he winced and returned to outer consciousness, spitting out the food and then washing his mouth. The onlookers concluded that the man must be somehow unclean and a hypocrite; they regarded him scornfully and he slunk away, humiliated. Ramakrishna confirmed their suspicions by willingly taking prasad from another of the devotees.

The immense crowd further retarded Ramakrishna's progress, and it was nearly four hours later that he and his disciples finally reached the boat that was to take them back

to Dakshineswar. A devotee named Navachaitanya Mitra came running in wild haste and threw himself at Ramakrishna's feet, weeping and begging for his grace. Ramakrishna touched him and he became ecstatic, dancing and singing the Master's praises until he was calmed by a second touch. Navachaitanya had met Ramakrishna several times previously, but this experience changed his life. He put his son in charge of the family and retired to live in solitude on the bank of the Ganges.

AFTER the visit to Panihati, Ramakrishna's throat grew worse. It had rained on and off during that day, so the doctors blamed the weather. Ramakrishna himself, with typical mischievousness, blamed Ramchandra and some of the other older devotees, saying that he would never have gone to the festival if they had forbidden him more energetically. The doctors gave him an internal salve and a plaster to put on the outside of the throat, without causing any improvement. They also told him not to talk, but he disobeyed them.

By now, July was half over. Ramakrishna was in considerable pain and his throat was so much swollen that he could swallow no solid food and had to live on milk with cream of wheat boiled in it. The doctors decided that he was suffering from what was called in those days "clergyman's sore throat," a form of laryngitis brought on by overstraining the voice. They prescribed medicine and diet but Ramakrishna continued to break their two principal rules: he went into samadhi and he talked. Devotees were coming to visit him in ever increasing numbers and he never refused to instruct them. However, he would keep complaining to the Divine Mother, "why do you bring so many people here? There's such a crowd I don't have time to wash or eat. This body's nothing but a drum with holes in it—how long can it last if it's played day and night?"

During the month of September, a lady invited some of the young disciples and householder devotees to have supper at her house. She knew that Ramakrishna was sick but, with the ruthlessness of a hostess, she nevertheless sent him a message pressing him to come, even if only for a few minutes. The messenger returned to report that this was out of the question; Ramakrishna's throat had started to bleed. All the guests were dismayed, and Naren became silent and very grave. Later, he told them, "He who has made us all so happy may be going to leave us. I've been reading medical books and questioning friends who are doctors. They say that this kind of throat ailment can develop into cancer. And now this bleeding makes me even more afraid that that's what it is. If so, there is no known cure for it."

It was therefore agreed that Ramakrishna must be put under a more systematic and efficient treatment without delay. Next day, some of the older householder devotees went to Dakshineswar and persuaded him that he could be better cared for if he moved into Calcutta. A few days later, they were able to rent a small house in the Baghbazar district. From its roof the Ganges could be seen, and this was regarded as a great asset, since Ramakrishna loved the river so dearly. Nevertheless, when they brought him there, he declared at once that he could not stay a single night; the place seemed unbearably shut in after the spaciousness of the Dakshineswar gardens. He actually walked to the house of Balaram Bose, who received him lovingly and begged him to remain there until a more suitable lodging could be found.

Meanwhile, the devotees called in several well-known Calcutta physicians to examine Ramakrishna. They all diagnosed cancer, and their attitude was pessimistic; but they were prepared to treat him to the best of their ability. The devotees chose Dr. Mahendralal Sarkar, chiefly because he was a

homeopathist. Homeopathy—which was being much discussed at that period—is a method of treating a patient by drugs which would produce, in a healthy person, symptoms like those of the patient's disease. These drugs are usually administered in minute quantities. The devotees therefore knew that Dr. Sarkar would not overdose Ramakrishna; too much medicine had always seemed to disagree with him. Under the circumstances, this was probably as good a reason for choosing a doctor as any other.

The news of Ramakrishna's move to Calcutta spread by word of mouth all over the city. Crowds of people, both friends and strangers, invaded Balaram's house from early morning till night, and Ramakrishna was available to them all day long, with a break of only two hours for his midday meal and rest. It was as if he had come to Calcutta for their greater convenience, to spare them the journey to Dakshineswar, rather than for his own medical care. Very few of those who saw him can have dreamed that he was mortally ill. He spoke of God with his customary fervor and went frequently into samadhi.

In a few days, another house was found—55 Shyampukur Street—and Ramakrishna moved into it after having stayed at Balaram's about a week. The rooms which could be occupied by him and his devotees were all on the upper floor of the house, and there were not enough of them for comfort. There was no one able to cook food in the way that Ramakrishna needed; so Sarada Devi, who was still at Dakshineswar, had to be asked if she would do this. Sarada's shyness was well known; it was a real ordeal for her to live in a house full of men. But she came to Shyampukur Street nevertheless, and managed to do her cooking on a tiny covered terrace near the door which led to the roof. When the food had to be served, it would either be fetched by one of the devotees or brought

to Ramakrishna by Sarada herself, after everyone else had been asked to leave his room. She would not come down to her own room to sleep until the others had retired for the night; and, since there was only one bathroom, she would get up at three in the morning so as to be able to use it in complete privacy.

It was found that Dr. Sarkar had met Ramakrishna already, many years previously, while visiting Dakshineswar to attend Mathur and his family. When he came to examine Ramakrishna, he recognized him at once. The doctor charged a fee for his first visit. But when he had learned that the entire cost of Ramakrishna's lodging, food and nursing was to be borne by the devotees—even though this could mean rationing the food for themselves and their children, pawning family ornaments and mortgaging their homes—he announced that in future he would attend Ramakrishna free of charge. At first, Dr. Sarkar did not give up all hope of his patient's recovery. He believed that the disease might possibly be curable, though admittedly the cure would be difficult and lengthy.

The devotees were united in their readiness to make drastic material sacrifices for their Master. But, as the weeks passed, they became divided into three groups, each with a different interpretation of the meaning of his illness.

The first group, which was headed by Girish Ghosh, reasoned as follows: The Master is a divine incarnation. Therefore he is not subject to karma, in the form of illness or mishap. If he is sick, then he is sick for some purpose of his own; and, in this sense, it is a kind of play acting. As soon as his purpose has been fulfilled, he will cast off the appearance of sickness and return at once to normal health.

The second group stressed the fact that Ramakrishna had always declared himself to be the child and instrument of the Divine Mother, with no will other than her will. Therefore,

they reasoned, it is the Mother who has made the Master sick. No doubt she is doing this, in some way, for the good of humanity. We cannot know what her purpose is. Indeed, it is possible that the Master himself does not know. We can only be sure that, when the Mother's purpose has been fulfilled, the Master will recover.

The third group disagreed radically with this (from a practical viewpoint) fatalistic attitude. They believed just as firmly as the others in the divinity of the Master's nature; but they drew a clear distinction between that divine nature and the physical nature of the body in which he was now living on earth. This body, they said, was mortal like any other and subject to disease from natural causes. Therefore it could be healed by human science; and it was the duty of the Master's devotees to use the help of this science, instead of passively waiting for God's will to be revealed. This group was headed by Naren and it contained most if not all of the young monastic disciples.

DR. SARKAR soon became fascinated by Ramakrishna. He would visit him daily at different hours, so as to watch him in various conditions. In order to do this, the Doctor neglected his paying patients. "I have made you talk too much," he would say. "That was unwise. But don't talk to anyone else for the rest of the day. Then no harm will be done."

When Sarkar learned that many of the devotees regarded Ramakrishna as a divine incarnation, his scientific scepticism was affronted. "Divine incarnation," he exclaimed scornfully, "what kind of a thing is that? To grovel before a human being who excretes filth—how ridiculous!" He would declare that he himself admired Ramakrishna simply for his love of truth.

However, the Doctor had another side to his character.

M. tells how he admitted that, "that fellow the intellect is extremely narrow-minded; if he meets any difficulty, he cries 'impossible!' But the heart doesn't believe in impossibilities— and that's how all real discoveries are made and will be made in the future." No doubt Sarkar enjoyed playing the down-to-earth scientist in order to shock the more sentimental among the devotees. At the same time, he maintained an admirable open-mindedness. When two of the young disciples went into ecstasy after singing religious songs, Sarkar took their pulses and agreed that they had genuinely lost consciousness of external objects, as though they had fainted. Then Ramakrishna passed his hand over their chests and uttered the name of God, making them conscious again. Sarkar said, "this seems to be all your play." Ramakrishna answered smiling, "not my play but God's." During the Durga Puja, Sarkar took the opportunity of examining Ramakrishna with a stethoscope while he was in samadhi. No heartbeat could be detected. He also touched Ramakrishna's eyeball with his finger. There was no reaction. The Doctor recorded these facts and said he was unable to explain them.

Ramakrishna showed much affection for Sarkar and enjoyment of their talks. One day, he impulsively put his feet in the Doctor's lap, and then told him, "you are certainly very pure. Otherwise, I couldn't have put my feet in your lap." He described how the Divine Mother had made it known to him in a vision that Sarkar would accumulate a great deal of knowledge but that it would be "dry knowledge." Then he added, smiling, "but you will soften."

Dr. Sarkar was exceedingly strict about Ramakrishna's diet. One day, when Ramakrishna's condition had taken a turn for the worse, he traced the cause to the presence of cauliflower juice in the soup. And yet, with all his strictness, he seems to have made up his mind quite soon that the case was

hopeless. On October 25th, M. was alone with Sarkar and told him that one of the devotees believed Ramakrishna had created the disease merely to "pamper the Doctor's ego" and that he could cure himself whenever he wished. Sarkar exclaimed impatiently that this was nonsense. "The disease is incurable," he added. "There's no doubt about that."

EARLY in November came the day for the celebration of the Kali Puja. On Ramakrishna's instructions, a small ceremony was arranged to be held in his room. About thirty people gathered there. Everything was ready. But Ramakrishna himself made no move to take part in the worship. Then Girish Ghosh had an inspiration: the Master must be giving them this opportunity of worshiping the Divine Mother within his own body. So he took flowers and sandal paste and offered them at Ramakrishna's feet, exclaiming, "glory to the Divine Mother!" A thrill passed through Ramakrishna's body and he went into samadhi. Girish's action was then imitated by M., Rakhal and all the other devotees in turn. M. writes that, as they looked at Ramakrishna, his face was transformed and began to shine with an unearthly light, and his hands assumed the traditional gestures of the Divine Mother, one of them conferring blessings, the other bidding the devotees to be without fear.

GENUINE and deep as Girish's devotion to Ramakrishna was, it set an example which could be unwholesome for smaller natures. Such people were apt to infer from Girish's life and behavior that religion was a mere matter of emotion, tear-shedding, ecstatic singing and dancing. Even Girish's famous granting of "the power of attorney" to Ramakrishna sounded

delightfully easy to many who had absolutely no notion what true self-surrender means.

It may be imagined how vigorously Naren attacked this attitude. He pointed out that Ramakrishna had been through long years of the strictest self-discipline and that his ecstasy was the fruit of that discipline, not a superficial emotionalism. "When people try to practice religion," said Naren, "eighty per cent of them turn into cheats, and about fifteen per cent go mad. It's only the remaining five per cent who get some direct knowledge of the Truth and so become blessed. Therefore, beware!"

At first, even the young disciples were unwilling to agree with Naren; they felt he was being too severe. But then it was discovered that several devotees were actually trying to induce the outer physical symptoms of samadhi and imitate the movements of one who is dancing in a state of ecstasy. Naren reasoned with these devotees and persuaded them to stop starving themselves and eat wholesome food, and to try to control their emotions instead of cultivating hysteria. The result was an increase in spirituality and a decrease in outward show. For the few who would not be persuaded, Naren had a more drastic form of treatment; he made such fun of their posturings that the other devotees laughed at them, shaming them into common sense.

WHILE he was at Shyampukur, Ramakrishna had a vision in which he saw his subtle body emerge from his gross physical body while he was walking about the room. He observed that the back of the subtle body was covered with sores, especially where the trunk joined the throat. He wondered why this was so. The Divine Mother explained to him that many people who had committed evil deeds had touched him and thus become

pure. Their bad karma had been transferred to him and had produced the sores on his body. Ramakrishna did not seem at all disturbed by this discovery. Indeed, he said repeatedly that he was ready to be reborn many thousands of times more, if his incarnations could be of service to others. However, Naren and the young disciples, when they were told of the vision, determined that no newcomer should be allowed to touch Ramakrishna as long as he was sick. They also tried to cut down the ever growing number of visitors by ruling that no one could be admitted who was not known to at least one of the regular devotees.

Girish Ghosh said of these restrictions, "there's no harm in trying, but it isn't possible to stop people from seeing the Master, for that's the whole purpose of his coming to earth." As for Ramakrishna, he continued to talk about God to anyone and everyone who could get into his room. One day, he was teaching a young man the best postures for meditation on God with form and without form. "But I can't show you any more," he added. "As soon as I sit in that posture, the mind becomes absorbed in samadhi and the vital force of the body rises. That hurts the sore in my throat. So the doctor has told me particularly that there mustn't be any samadhi." "Then why have you been showing me all these things?" the young man exclaimed, in dismay, "you shouldn't have done that!" "I know," said Ramakrishna, "but I had to show you something."

During one of Ramakrishna's visits to the Star Theater in 1884, he had greatly praised an actress who played the part of the young Chaitanya. At the end of the play, Ramakrishna had passed into samadhi, and this actress had taken the opportunity to bow down and touch his feet. Since then, she had become his devotee, regarding him as a divine incarnation. When she heard of his illness, she determined to see him once again.

In those days, actresses in the Bengali theater were regarded as no better than prostitutes—a prejudice which also persisted in England until at least the beginning of the nineteenth century. It was therefore unthinkable that the strict young disciples would allow her inside the house. So the actress went to a devotee named Kalipada Ghosh and asked for his help. Kalipada was a close friend of Girish Ghosh and, like him, believed that Ramakrishna was an avatar and his illness a play, and that therefore he could not possibly be harmed by anybody's touch, even if it were impure. He dressed the actress up in male European clothes—such as were fashionable at that time among the young men of Bengal—and brought her thus disguised to Shyampukur. They were able to enter Ramakrishna's room at a time when no other visitors were present. Kalipada immediately told Ramakrishna who the supposed young man really was, and Ramakrishna laughed heartily, praising the actress' courage and devotion. He gave her some spiritual instruction and allowed her to touch his feet with her forehead. When she and Kalipada had left, he told the disciples of the trick which had been played on them, with so much enjoyment that they could not be angry.

MEANWHILE, Ramakrishna's condition grew steadily worse. Dr. Sarkar became convinced that the polluted air of Calcutta was harming him. The Doctor therefore advised a second move—to a house outside the city. A garden house was found in the northwestern suburbs, on the way to Dakshineswar: 90 Cossipore Road. The rent was eighty rupees a month; somewhat higher than the rent at Shyampukur. When Ramakrishna heard this, he called Surendra Nath Mitra to him and asked him to undertake to pay the whole amount, saying that the financial strain on the other, poorer devotees would be too

great. Surendra gladly agreed to this. The move was made on December 11, 1885, shortly before the end of the Hindu month of Agrahayan. Some haste was necessary, because custom forbids a change of dwelling during Paush, the month that follows it.

The Cossipore house stood in a pleasant garden of about four and a half acres which contained a small pool and a much larger pond and was planted with fruit trees—mango, jack fruit and lichee—as well as vegetables for use in the kitchen. The house was a two-story building, more spacious than the house at Shyampukur. (Vivekananda had always wished that the Cossipore property could belong to the Ramakrishna Order. It was finally purchased by the Order in 1946, but, by then, the house was much dilapidated. It has since been torn down and replaced by a new building made to look as nearly as possible like the original at the time of Ramakrishna's occupancy.)

Since the Cossipore house was far from those parts of Calcutta in which most of the boys had their homes, Naren decided that they would have to live on the premises; otherwise they would not be able to take their turns at the night-nursing. The boys all agreed to this arrangement, although many of their parents or guardians were strongly against it. So now, for the first time, they found themselves making a deliberate choice between home-life and life with their Master; a first step, in fact, toward renouncing the world. Naren himself was not even as free as the rest of them because he had the responsibility to his family which had fallen on him after his father's death. At that time, he still planned to support his mother and brothers by becoming an attorney—a project which he soon afterward abandoned—and was studying for his bar examinations. However, he resolved somehow to find time at Cossipore for his studying.

His presence there was certainly needed. The boys were relying on him more and more for leadership and inspiration. Naturally enough, some of them were troubled by doubts. What was this way of life to which they were committing themselves? Did they really want to become monks? Could they dare to say that they knew better than their own fathers, who kept telling them that this was all madness? And now their Master, whom they had learned to look upon as a superhuman being, was wasting away before their eyes. . . . One day, a rumor somehow spread among them that his horrible disease was infectious. When the time came to attend him, some of them hung back. Naren found out the reason of their fear and forced them all into Ramakrishna's room. In a corner was a cup with the remains of some gruel which he had been unable to finish; it was mixed with his saliva. Naren picked up the cup without hesitation and swallowed its contents.

One night, Naren could not sleep. Finding that Sarat and a few of the others were awake, he said to them, "come, let's stroll in the garden and have a smoke." While they were walking there, Naren said, "the Master's disease is very bad—who knows, he may have made up his mind to abandon the body? So let us now make as much spiritual progress as we possibly can—by service to him and by meditation and devotion. Otherwise, when he leaves us, how shall we ever forgive ourselves? Are we going to put off calling on the Lord until all our worldly desires are satisfied? See how we're letting the days slip by! We're getting more and more tied up in this net of desires —they'll be the death and destruction of us! Let's give them up! Yes, let's give them all up!" Naren sat down under a tree. The others did likewise. Then, seeing a heap of dead grass and broken branches lying nearby, Naren said, "let's set fire to them. Holy men light dhuni fires at this hour of the night, to burn up their desires. Let's do the same." So they made a

fire. As the flames rose, they felt an extraordinary bliss; as if their desires were indeed being consumed. "Why did we never do this before?" someone said; and they resolved to light dhuni fires whenever they got the opportunity. By the time they had run out of fuel, it was four o'clock in the morning.

SHORTLY after his arrival at Cossipore, Ramakrishna was able to walk for a little while in the garden. The devotees were glad, thinking that the exercise would build up his strength; but instead it seemed to exhaust him. So the Doctor recommended a broth of kid's meat. This produced a slight improvement. As at Shyampukur, Sarada Devi had charge of the cooking, but now she was helped by Ramakrishna's niece Lakshmi Devi, the daughter of his brother Rameswar.

The pioneer exponent of homeopathic medicine in Calcutta was Rajendra Nath Datta. It was he who had originally converted Dr. Sarkar to this method of treatment. Rajendra Nath knew that if he could cure Ramakrishna he would win a spectacular victory for the cause of homeopathy; so he now asked Dr. Sarkar for permission to examine his patient. Dr. Sarkar did not object; although he was one of the most famous doctors in the city, he was admirably free from professional vanity. After careful consideration, Rajendra Nath treated Ramakrishna with the drug he had selected, lycopodium (200). Ramakrishna appeared to respond to this treatment for a few weeks, and the hopes of the devotees rose accordingly.

Meanwhile, he showed an ever increasing love for his disciples and devotees. M. describes how, on the morning of December 23rd he said to Niranjan, "you're my father—I'll sit on your lap!" Touching the chest of Kalipada Ghosh, he said, "may your spirit be awakened!" He blessed two women devotees, and they shed tears of joy.

In the evening, he asked M. how long it would take him to recover. M. answered evasively that it would perhaps take five or six months. Ramakrishna behaved as if surprised and impatient. "As long as that?" he exclaimed. And he added, "how is it that I am so ill—in spite of all these visions, and this ecstasy and samadhi?" As on similar occasions, one seems to detect a teasing and testing of his companions.

"It was revealed to me in a vision," he continued, "that during my last days, I should have to live on pudding. One day—since I've had this disease—my wife brought me pudding to eat. I burst into tears and I said to her, 'is this what it meant about my last days—living on pudding, and so painfully, too?' "

It was in December, also, that a pandit named Sasadhar came to Cossipore. He said to Ramakrishna: "The Scriptures tell us that a paramahamsa like yourself can cure his physical sicknesses by his own will power. Why don't you try it, Sir?"

"You call yourself a pandit," exclaimed Ramakrishna, "and you can make such a suggestion! This mind has been given up to God, once and for all. How can I withdraw it from him and make it dwell on this worthless body?"

Sasadhar was silenced. But, after he had left, Naren and the others who had been present begged Ramakrishna to cure himself—for their sake if not for his own. "Do you think I'm suffering like this because I want to?" Ramakrishna retorted. "Of course I want to get better! But it all depends on Mother."

"Then please pray to her," said Naren. "She can't refuse to listen." Ramakrishna protested that he could never utter such words. But they continued to plead with him and at last he agreed that he would do what he could. A few hours later, Naren asked him, "well, did you pray to her?" And Ramakrishna told him, "I said to Mother, 'I can't eat anything because of this pain—please let me eat a little!' But she pointed

to all of you and said, 'why, you're eating through so many mouths already!' So then I felt ashamed and couldn't utter another word."

At DAKSHINESWAR, even as much as five years before the onset of this disease, Ramakrishna had spoken from time to time about the circumstances which would indicate his approaching death. "When you see me staying nights in Calcutta, and taking food from anyone and everyone, without distinction, and even eating part of the food which has been given to someone else—then you'll know that my end is coming." Again, he had said, "before I go, I'll cast my whole secret to the winds. When many people have discovered who I really am and start to whisper about it, then this body will cease to exist, by the Mother's will. At that time, it will be shown which of the devotees belong to the inner circle and which to the outer." And now at Cossipore, Ramakrishna repeated and clarified this last statement. "The devotees are being sifted by this illness," he said, "it is showing who belongs to the inner circle and who to the outer. Those who are living here, renouncing the world, belong to the inner circle; and those who pay occasional visits and ask, 'how are you, Sir?'—they belong to the outer."

Ramakrishna's prediction that "I'll cast my whole secret to the winds"—in other words, that he would publicly declare and demonstrate his divine nature—must certainly have referred to the events of January 1, 1886. On the afternoon of that day, Ramakrishna, who was still maintaining the slight improvement apparently caused by Rajendra Nath's treatment, said he felt strong enough to take a walk in the garden. This was about three o'clock. As the day was a holiday, householder devotees had been arriving since noon to visit the Mas-

ter; by the time he came downstairs from his room more than thirty of them were gathered in groups in the garden or inside the hall of the house. Seeing him, they all rose and bowed reverently. Ramakrishna began walking slowly through the garden toward the gate, with the devotees following him at a respectful distance.

Girish Ghosh was sitting under a tree in conversation with some friends. As Ramakrishna approached, they rose and came to meet him. "Well, Girish," said Ramakrishna, without any preliminary salutation, "I hear you're saying all these things about me to everyone, wherever you go. What is it you see in me, that you can say such things?"

Falling to his knees on the ground and folding his palms, Girish answered in a voice choking with emotion, "who am I to speak of him? The sages Vyasa and Valmiki could have found no words to measure his glory!"

Ramakrishna seemed delighted. He blessed Girish and the assembled devotees, exclaiming, "what more need I tell you? Be illumined!" Then he went into samadhi. At this, an overwhelming fervor possessed the devotees; forgetting that they were not to touch the Master, they began taking the dust of his feet, crying, "*jai*" (meaning "hail to," or literally "victory to") "*Sri Ramakrishna!*" And now Ramakrishna began to touch them, one after another. Some became ecstatic. Others felt themselves endowed with a power for profound meditation. All said later that they felt Ramakrishna had that afternoon for the first time revealed himself as a divine incarnation.

It so happened that none of the young disciples were then present in the garden. Naren and several of the others were asleep inside the house, having attended the Master or meditated throughout the previous night. Latu and Sarat were on the roof of the house and saw what was going on. One of the devotees shouted to them ecstatically to come down without

delay and share the Master's blessing. But the boys would not do so. They had seized the opportunity to sweep out his room and air his bedding in the sunshine, and—believing, as Naren had taught them, that service to the guru is more important than any individual mystical experience—they would not leave their work half done. Not long after this, Ramakrishna returned to normal consciousness. He then went back into the house.

Saradananda sums up the significance of this event as follows: "The Master, by revealing his true nature to the devotees, set them free from fear."

ON January 2nd, Naren had an experience which he described two days later to M: "I was meditating here last Saturday when I suddenly felt a peculiar sensation in my heart. It was probably the awakening of the kundalini. I clearly perceived the ida and pingala nerves. Yesterday, I told the Master about it. I said to him, 'the others have had their realization, please let me have it too. Am I the only one who has to stay unsatisfied?' He said, 'why don't you settle your family affairs first? Then you can have everything. . . . What is it you want?' I said, 'I want to remain in samadhi for three or four days, only coming down to the sense-plane once in a while, to eat a little.' Then he said to me, 'you're a fool—there's a much higher state than that! You are fond of singing the song, "All that exists art Thou"—well, after coming down from samadhi, one may see that it is God himself who has become the universe and all that exists. Only an ishwarakoti can reach that state. An ordinary man can only reach samadhi, at best. He can't go any farther.'

"So this morning, I went home. My family scolded me, saying 'why do you wander about like a vagabond? Your bar

examination will soon be here, and you're not attending to your studies.' I went to study at my grandmother's. But when I tried to begin reading, I was overcome by great fear. I felt that study was something terribly evil. I burst into tears—I've never cried so bitterly in my life before. I left my books and ran out of the house. I ran through the streets. My shoes flew off—I don't know where they went. I ran past a stack of straw and got straw all over me. I went on running until I got here."

THE SLIGHT improvement in Ramakrishna's condition came to an end, and now the disease made steady progress. His body became dreadfully emaciated, until it was almost a skeleton. He could speak only in hoarse whispers; sometimes he was reduced to making signs. The haemorrhages in his throat were frequent, and he was often in great pain. But, throughout these final months of physical deterioration, he remained essentially himself, a being of manifest spiritual power, selfless love and keen intuition. His mind never seemed at all clouded by his sufferings and his cheerfulness was astonishing. He would say, "oh my mind, remain in bliss; let the body and its pain look after each other." He told Naren, "I am leaving the boys in your care. See that they practice their meditation and worship. Don't let them go back home." One day, he asked them all to take begging-bowls and beg their food in the streets, in the manner of wandering monks. They enjoyed doing this, and they brought back the various kinds of raw food they had been given, and cooked them. They offered some to the Master. He took a few grains of rice, saying, "well done! This food is very pure."

During the night of March 14th, he whispered to M., "I've gone on suffering like this because I'm afraid you'll shed so many tears if I leave you. But, if you all tell me, 'that's enough suffering—let the body go,' then I may give it up."

The next morning, however, he was eager to speak of his spiritual experiences, although he could only do so in whispers. "Do you know what I see at this moment? God has become everything. Men and women are just frameworks covered with skin—it is he who is moving their heads and limbs. I had a vision like this, once before—that the gardens and houses and roads and men and cattle were made of wax. I see that God himself has become the block and the executioner and the sacrificial victim. . . . Ah, what a vision!"

"There sits Latu, resting his head on the palm of his hand. But I see that it's the Lord himself who rests his head on his hand."

"If this body were to be preserved a short while longer, many people would become spiritually awakened. . . . But, no —that won't happen. This time, the body will not be preserved . . ."

"There are two persons in this body—one is the Divine Mother—yes, the Mother is one of them—the other is her devotee. It's the devotee who broke his arm. It's the devotee who is now sick. . . . Do you understand? Alas—to whom shall I tell all this? Who'll understand me?"

"God becomes man, an avatar, and comes to earth with his devotees. And the devotees leave the world with him when he leaves it—"

At this point, Rakhal, who was present in the room with Naren, M. and others, said, "so we beg you not to go away and leave us behind!"

Ramakrishna smiled: "A band of minstrels suddenly appears, dances and sings. Then, just as suddenly, it departs. They arrive and they leave, without anybody recognizing them."

Presently Naren said, "some people get angry with me when I talk to them about renunciation."

"One *must* renounce!" said Ramakrishna. Then, pointing to his limbs, he went on, "if one thing is placed upon another, you must take away the one to get at the other. How can you get at the second thing without removing the first? When you see everything filled with God and nothing but God, how can you see anything else?"

Naren asked, "must one renounce the world?"

"How can you see the world, if you see nothing but God? Didn't I just say that? But I'm talking about mental renunciation. Not one of those who have come here is a worldly person. Perhaps some of them had a little bit of desire—for woman, for instance—" (At this, both Rakhal and M. smiled) "But the desire has been satisfied."

Ramakrishna looked at them all with eyes that were full of love. Then he exclaimed, "grand!"

"What's grand?" Naren asked.

"I see that everything is being made ready for a grand renunciation!"

ALTHOUGH this remark sounds like a prophecy, the "grand renunciation" had in fact already been begun. In January 1886, Gopal Sur, who had just returned from a pilgrimage, told Ramakrishna that he wanted to present monastic ocher wearing-cloths and rosaries of rudraksha beads to some of the monks who were passing through Calcutta. "Why not give them to these boys?" Ramakrishna asked, indicating Naren and some of the other disciples. "They are full of the spirit of renunciation. You won't find any better monks anywhere." Gopal had twelve pieces of cloth and twelve rosaries; these he handed over to the Master. One evening, Ramakrishna distributed them, putting the disciples who received them through a special ceremony and then giving them permission to accept

food, like real monks, from anybody, regardless of caste or creed. These disciples were Naren, Rakhal, Jogindra, Baburam, Niranjan, Tarak, Sarat, Shashi, Gopal Sur, Kali and Latu. The twelfth cloth and rosary were put aside for Girish. In this sense it may be said that the Ramakrishna Order was founded by Ramakrishna himself, although it did not come into official existence until after his death.

Now that it became tragically obvious that medical science had failed and that Ramakrishna was dying, Sarada Devi made up her mind to try to save him by fasting and prayer. So she went to the temple of Shiva at Tarakeshwar, and lay down before the shrine for two days without food or drink, begging for a miraculous cure. Speaking of this fast in her later years, she would describe how, "during the night of the second day, I was startled to hear a crackling sound, as if a pile of earthenware pots were being broken by a single blow. I came out of the stupor in which I had been lying, and the idea flashed through my mind: 'What is a husband? What is a wife? What are worldly relationships? Why am I about to kill myself?' All my ego-attachment to the Master disappeared. My mind was possessed by complete renunciation. I groped through the darkness and sprinkled my face with holy water from the small tank behind the temple. I also drank a little, as my throat was parched with thirst. I felt refreshed. The next morning, I came back to the Cossipore Garden. When the Master saw me, he seemed amused. He asked, 'well—did you get what you wanted?' Then he said, 'you got nothing.' "

ONE EVENING, while Naren was meditating, he felt as if a lamp had begun to burn behind his head. The light grew more and

more intense, until it seemed that the lamp itself burst. Naren went into samadhi. When, after a while, he became partly aware of his surroundings, he felt that he had somehow lost his body and was nothing but a head. "Where's my body?" he shouted. Gopal Sur heard him and came into the room. "Where's my body?" Naren repeated. "Why, it's here, Naren. Can't you feel it?" asked Gopal. But Naren continued to cry out for his body, until Gopal, in alarm, ran to tell Ramakrishna what had happened. Ramakrishna did not seem at all surprised. "Let him stay like that for a while," he said calmly. "He's been bothering me long enough to put him into that state."

As Naren's mind came slowly down to the normal plane, he felt a marvelous peace. He hastened to Ramakrishna's room. "Now Mother has shown you everything," Ramakrishna told him. "But what she has shown will be hidden from you. It will be shut up in a box, like a jewel—and I'll keep the key. When you've finished doing Mother's work on earth, then the box will be unlocked and you'll know everything you knew just now."

Later, Ramakrishna told the other disciples, "Naren will give up his body of his own free will. When he knows who he really is, he'll refuse to stay on this earth. Very soon, he's going to shake the world with his intellect and his spiritual power. I've prayed to Mother to keep knowledge of the Absolute away from him and cover his eyes with a veil of maya, because he has so much work to do. But the veil is so thin, it may be torn at any moment."

It has been said already that we have no continuous narrative of the last three and a half months of Ramakrishna's life. Saradananda's book ends with an account of the events of January 1st; M. takes us only to the last week in April. After that we have nothing but a few scattered reminiscences,

passed down to us from Sarada, Naren, Rakhal and other disciples and devotees. Their proper chronological order is sometimes uncertain.

Once, while Ramakrishna was hardly able to speak, he wrote on a piece of paper, "Naren will teach others." When Naren protested, Ramakrishna said, "you will have to. Your very bones will make you do it." On another occasion, he told Naren, "Rakhal has the keen intelligence of a king. If he chose, he could rule a kingdom." Naren understood his Master's intention in saying this. Next time the disciples were all seated together, Naren spoke in praise of Rakhal's greatness and announced, "from today, we shall call Rakhal our king." Henceforward, Rakhal was known familiarly as "Maharaj," Great Raja. Ramakrishna was delighted when they told him the new nickname. This was one of the many ways in which he strengthened those bonds of love which alone could hold the young monks together in their future time of trial.

HARI (Turiyananda) used in later years to tell the devotees an anecdote which illustrates the strange "play acting" aspect of Ramakrishna's illness.

"One day, I approached the Master's bed and asked him, 'Sir, how are you?' The Master replied, 'Oh, I am in great pain. I can't eat anything, and there's an unbearable burning in my throat.' But I wasn't fooled. I saw that the Master was still testing my devotion. For I knew that the Upanishads declare that the play of the Atman is all 'as if'—not actuality The Atman never experiences any sickness or suffering. And a man of realization *is* the Atman.

"The more the Master complained, the clearer it was to me that I was being tested. Finally I couldn't control myself any longer. I burst out, 'Sir—whatever you may say, I see you only as an infinite ocean of bliss!'

"At this, the Master said to himself with a smile, 'this rascal has found me out!' "

DURING this terminal phase of the disease, Nag Mahashay visited Ramakrishna only occasionally, because he found it hard to bear the sight of the wasting body. On one of these visits, Ramakrishna welcomed him warmly, embraced him and then asked, "can *you* do anything to cure me? The doctors have failed."

Nag Mahashay possessed a psychic power by which he was able, if he wished, to transfer a patient's disease to his own body. He hesitated only for a moment; then, in the greatness of his devotion, he found courage and said in a firm voice, "yes, Sir, I can cure you. By your grace, I'll do it at once." He stepped forward and was about to lay his hands on Ramakrishna. But Ramakrishna pushed him away, saying, "oh yes—I know you could do *that*."

EARLY in August, Ramakrishna called Jogin and asked him to read aloud out of the Bengali almanac the days of the month Sravana, from the twenty-fifth (August 9th) onward. Jogin read on until he reached the last day of the month, which is August 15th in the Julian calendar. Ramakrishna then made a sign that he did not want to hear any more.

A FEW DAYS later, Ramakrishna summoned Naren to him. There was no one else in the room. Gazing fixedly at Naren, he passed into samadhi. Naren felt that a force somewhat like an electric current was taking possession of his body; slowly, he lost consciousness. When he came to himself again, he found Ramakrishna weeping. "Oh, Naren," he said, "I've just

given you everything I have—and now I'm as poor as a beggar! But these powers I've handed over to you will make you able to do great things in the world. When all that is accomplished, you can go back where you came from."

On August 13th, Naren was again in Ramakrishna's room, alone. The body on the bed seemed barely alive and quite preoccupied with its pain. *Could* this abjectly suffering creature be an incarnation of God? "If he would declare his divinity now in the presence of death," Naren said to himself, "I'd accept it." He was instantly ashamed of the thought and put it from his mind. For some moments he stood watching the Master's face intently. Then, slowly, Ramakrishna's lips parted and he said in a distinct voice, "Oh Naren—aren't you convinced *yet?* He who once was born as Rama, and again as Krishna, is now living as Ramakrishna within this body—and not in your Vedantic sense."

By adding "not in your Vedantic sense" Ramakrishna was, of course, emphasizing that he did not merely mean that he was essentially the Atman, as is every being and object, according to Vedanta Philosophy. Ramakrishna was explicitly declaring himself to be an avatar and the reincarnation of former avatars.

Throughout Sunday, August 15th, Ramakrishna appeared to be sinking. His pulse was irregular and shortly before dusk he began to breathe with difficulty. Nevertheless, he had the strength to say a loving and reassuring farewell to Sarada, who had come with Lakshmi to his bedside. "Listen," he told her, "it seems I'm to go away somewhere—all through water—to a place that's far off." When Sarada began to weep, he continued, "you mustn't be anxious. Your life will be just the same as it's been for so long. Naren and the others will look after you. They'll be as good to you as they've been to me. Take care of dear Lakshmi—"

During the evening, they tried to give him a little liquid food, but he could hardly swallow. While they were fanning him, he passed into samadhi and the body stiffened. The disciples feared that this must be the end. However, after midnight, he regained consciousness, said he was very hungry and, to their astonishment, took a full cup of porridge without apparent discomfort. He seemed refreshed by it. Naren now suggested that he should try to sleep. At this, Ramakrishna uttered the name of Kali three times in a clear ringing tone of which they would have supposed him physically incapable. Then he lay down, as if to sleep. He seemed to be quite comfortable, so Naren went downstairs to rest for a while.

Then, suddenly, a thrill passed through Ramakrishna's body, making its hair stand on end. The eyes became fixed on the tip of the nose. The face smiled. Ramakrishna was in samadhi. This happened at two minutes after one o'clock, early on Monday morning, August 16, 1886.

It proved to be his *mahasamadhi*—that final samadhi in which a knower of Brahman leaves the physical body. But the devotees were unable, as well as unwilling, to recognize it as such. Throughout the rest of the night, they watched and waited, with gradually diminishing hope. Girish Ghosh and Ramchandra Datta arrived; and, as morning dawned and the news spread around Calcutta, they were joined by many others. Vishwanath Upadhyaya refused to despair. He declared that there was still some heat in the body and began to rub the spine. When, at noon, Dr. Sarkar came to make an examination, he said that, in his opinion, death had actually occurred only half an hour previously.

At five o'clock that afternoon, Ramakrishna's body was brought downstairs and laid on a cot. It had been dressed in an ocher cloth and decorated with sandal paste and flowers. A photograph, to which I referred in the last chapter, was then

taken, at the suggestion of Dr. Sarkar. An hour later, to the accompaniment of devotional music, the body was carried to the nearby Baranagore ghat on the Ganges and there cremated—almost directly across the river from the spot on which the great temple of the Belur Math, Ramakrishna's monastery, would one day stand.

But the mourners that evening could not see that temple, or those other stately buildings, rising from the opposite bank to reassure them that the word and work of Ramakrishna would be carried on, from generation to generation, into the future. The last holy song was sung, the fire died down in the pit, the hot summer night fell on the unheeding city and the inconstant waters. Ramakrishna was gone from them in the flesh, leaving nothing tangible but these ashes which the devoted Shashi now collected in a copper urn. They were left alone with their loss.

Nevertheless, as the disciples walked back from the cremation-ground, they shed no tears. They all knew that their lives were committed, they could never desert each other now. They had nothing but their shared experience and their faith in the Master—and it was enough. So, with the courage of youth, they lifted up their voices and shouted, as if in triumph, *Jai Sri Ramakrishna!*

THE SYMPATHY FOR RELIGIONS

SWAMI SARADANANDA

THE SUBJECT this morning is the one peculiar feature of the religion of India. The whole history of India shows that—if example is better than precept, as the proverb says—the Indians have a glorious past and a bright present behind and around them in the field of religion to prove the utility and soundness of their all-embracing religious beliefs. Long before the Sun of Nazareth had arisen in the horizon of Palestine, long before the mighty Buddha had called his flock around and sent them all over Asia to preach the doctrine of sympathy and compassion, with especial directions not to revile any religion (for whoever reviles another religion injures not only that religion but also his own), there arose one in India who preached with the voice of thunder the active sympathy of all religions toward one another, based on the recognition of the fact that they all lead to the same goal. The author of the Bhagavad-Gita, the divine Krishna, found the solution of this vexed problem of the attitude of one religion toward another in these memorable words: "Whosoever comes to me through whatsoever way, I reach him. Know, all men are coming along the ways which in the end reach me." All through the history of India we find the practical carrying out of this wide principle in the field of religion. Never has there been a religious persecution in the land of the Hindus, and

never was individual liberty limited by society in the field of religion.

By sympathy the Vedantist does not mean a kind of dull indifference or haughty toleration, which seems to say, "I know you are wrong and my religion is the only true one, yet I will let you follow it; and perhaps one day your eyes will be opened." His sympathy is not a negative one, but it is of a direct, positive nature, which knows that all religions are true—they have the same goal. They are, as it were, parallel lines proceeding from the same point or the radii from one common center; or as a Vedantic poet expresses it in his beautiful language, "like the waters of the different rivers flowing through straight or winding paths and mingling with the ocean, losing all name and form, they all meet in Him, who is the one ocean of light and love."

Why should they quarrel then? Why may not I follow my own path, and at the same time help you actively and make the conditions of your traveling in your own path easier? This is the one great truth which the Vedanta has to give to the world. The Vedanta has never proselytized, never attempted to break this wonderful harmony of the religious orchestra of the universe by bringing it down to monotones, and yet wave after wave of spiritual thoughts and ideals have crossed the snows of the Himalayan peaks, toned the fanaticism in the dreary deserts of Persia and Arabia, beautified and enriched the beautiful land of the Greeks, and made the sublime more so in the land of the pyramids. The mission of the Vedanta to the West is not to make Christians Hindus, but to make the Christian a better Christian, the Hindu a better Hindu, and the Mohammedan a better Mohammedan; to convince men that in and through all these various religions there runs one common thread of truth: whatever way you go, you cannot but reach God. "He is the mover, the sustainer, the Lord, the

witness, the stay, the refuge, the friend of this universe," or as St. Paul says, "in Him we live and move and have our being." The Infinite is at the beginning of this evolution, and He is the end of it. The Vedanta, therefore, recognizes the one great fact, that there is unity in variety in the plan of nature; that however much there may be variety on any plane of existence, the physical, the mental, or the spiritual, yet in and through it there is that unity.

The second great fact on which the Vedantist builds his universal sympathy and toleration is that variation is necessary to evolution. What does evolution mean but the unfolding, the changing from one to another, and hence variation? Destroy variation, bring sameness in any field of nature, and you destroy evolution. And the universe is such a joined piece of mechanism, and nature is so uniform throughout, that this is not only true in the physical and the mental field, but also in the spiritual. Destroy variation, therefore, in the religious field, try to make all men think alike in religion, try to break down all religions and keep one in their place—you will find that you have destroyed religion itself. Then again we will find that as our attempts to make all men think alike will invariably fail, so it is impossible to bring one religion in place of the many. The many will survive as long as creation lasts. Recognize, therefore, this natural necessity of variation in the field of religion. Give every one of them its proper place, and know that they are all ways to attain to the Truth behind. The Truth will never change. It is beyond all changes of nature, beyond the realm of all law and causation. Yet the manifestation of this Truth in the field of law and causation is always partial and limited, and will always vary. Different ways will be discovered in different times to reach that Truth, and those different religions will be just as much true as those that exist at the present day.

FROM very old times man has tried to find the one common ground in which all religions meet. Attempts have been made in Alexandria, in Greece, and in many other places to cull truths from every religion and combine them into a new one. They have failed miserably, because they never recognized the truth that variation is necessary to evolution. They never recognized that all these religions are true, and suit minds in different stages of evolution. They never recognized that they all point toward the one great fact, that the end of evolution is to make man perfect by leading him into the superconscious state. Else how do we account for their general agreement on this point? Why do two religions which seem diametrically opposite in their rites and ceremonies and doctrines tell the same story here? In mystical ceremonies, in the garb of mythology, or in clear-cut philosophical language, they all speak the same truth, that man in his real nature is perfect and universal; that the little personalities grow and expand till they all find themselves to be the one universal individuality, infinite and perfect; that this is not something extraneous or the exclusive property of one man or some men, but that it is natural in every one and is the gradual unfolding of what is within. We in our ignorance think that the saying of Jesus that "I and my Father are one" is true in his case alone, or that when he said "Be ye therefore perfect as the Father in heaven is perfect" he is not to be taken literally. We in our foolish ignorance think that the superconscious stage, which transcends the realm of speech and thought, is a lower stage, a stage very much the same as the unconscious or the hypnotic stage brought about by the constant dwelling of the mind on one subject. Little do we dream in our arrogance that if the constant dwelling and concentration of the mind on one subject will produce hypnotism, we are already hypnotized by thoughts of love, money, power, or some such trifling thing

which today is and tomorrow will not be. Little do we stop to think that if the going beyond consciousness by thinking on God, developing all our faculties to their highest, and preserving all our energies from being squandered in the lower plane be a hypnotized condition, it is worse hypnotism to think, in the face of naked facts to the contrary, that we are free, that whatever our senses reach and reason thinks is true. Shake off all such foolish ideas, therefore, and follow your own religion, or whatever form of belief you believe in; know that nothing can destroy you. You create your own heaven or hell. "The kingdom of heaven is within you," and you will find it as soon as you like. Find that within. See that the universe is God's playground, that he has not left the management of it in the hands of anybody, and that man by whatever he is doing is coming nearer and nearer to the Deity.

Arguments have been raised to the effect that the preaching of universal sympathy and the toleration shown toward all religions will destroy religion entirely, will take off that intensity from men's religious belief which proceeds from the fact of their recognition that their religion alone is the true one. Shall we, then, let men continue in their faith in the infallibility of their own religion alone? Will it not be better not to open our eyes at all to the light which the researches of reason, of history, of science, and of real religion are bringing before us every day? The Vedanta answers in the first place: follow truth wherever it leads you. Truth will never conform itself to the individual or society, but the individual and society must conform themselves to it. Faith and belief gain their strength by being based on truth, but no amount of belief in any untruth will strengthen one's position.

Secondly, it is unreasonable and false to say that the sympathy that you extend toward other religions would be at the expense of the intensity of faith in your own. Believe as in-

tensely as you can in the infallibility of your own; follow it out in your daily life. At the same time believe that other religions are also as good in reaching God for minds which think differently from you. As in society there must be united action in conformity with the social laws, and also liberty for individual action, so also in the field of religion, every religion must have perfect individual freedom, and yet there must be active sympathy for all the others. Does the individual unit when acting in conformity with the social laws, trying to do good for the whole, limit his own personal freedom, or bring that good at the expense of the liberty of individual action? Hence active sympathy and toleration is only possible when we look upon other religions in the same light as we do our own, when we believe in the infallibility of not only our own but of other religions also. We will have to learn the great fact that if one religion is false the others are false also, and if one is true the others are true too. For if religion—and revelation—comes through the process of evolution, it cannot be the exclusive property of any one sect or any one individual. It is as common as God's wind and rain, which come both to the just and the unjust; it is like universal space, embracing everything that is sentient and insentient.

THE LAST MESSAGE OF SRI KRISHNA

SWAMI SATPRAKASHANANDA

SRI KRISHNA delivered his message, as is evident from literary records, on two significant occasions: 1) on the eve of the war of Kurukshetra, and 2) on the eve of his departure from the world. The first message, well-known as the Bhagavad-Gita (or Gita for short), was delivered to his friend and disciple Arjuna, on the very battlefield. The other message, which is evidently his second and last, was delivered to another devoted friend and disciple, Uddhava, not in a field of contest, but in a secluded and sacred place called Prabhasa, near the seacoast of Gujarat, north of Bombay. The Bhagavad-Gita, literally the "Song of God," though widely circulated as an independent book, is actually a small but pithy section of the voluminous Sanskrit epic the Mahabharata, a poetical work of ninety thousand couplets, perhaps the world's largest, being about seven times the size of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* put together.

The Last Message of Sri Krishna, which has not gained much circulation as an independent treatise, forms a part of one of the most authoritative Sanskrit scriptures, Srimad Bhagavatam (Section XI, chaps. 6-29). This sacred book (called the Bhagavatam for short), dwells specifically on the love of God and the knowledge of God. Sri Ramakrishna used

to remark that the Bhagavatam is fried in the butter of divine knowledge and soaked in the syrup of divine love. The Vaishnavas—the worshipers of Vishnu, the Omnipresent Preserver, who is all-love and all-bliss—hold this book in great veneration and consider it as authoritative as the Vedas. A small compendium of this book in lucid English, called *The Wisdom of God,* has been brought out by my brother disciple, Swami Prabhavananda, and is widely read by seekers of God, with much interest and profit.

There is no fundamental difference between the first and the last message so far as the central theme is concerned. But there is a difference in the methods of its presentation and the emphasis laid on certain aspects. Both messages center on the topic of the Highest Good and the means of its attainment. The Highest Good is defined by Vedanta as the cessation of all sufferings and the attainment of Supreme Bliss. This is the goal for which all are striving knowingly or unknowingly, directly or indirectly. Man is constantly struggling to overcome evil by good in some form or other. All human activities are directed to this end. What is the ultimate aim of this struggle? The removal of all evil and the attainment of the Supreme Good. After long, long experience in this world of dualities a person realizes that the unalloyed joy and the unmixed blessing that he has been seeking all along is not to be found anywhere in the relative order, where good and evil coexist. Then he is convinced that the supreme object of his search is God and God alone; it is He who is all-good beyond the pairs of opposites, such as birth and death, growth and decay, pain and pleasure, knowledge and ignorance, virtue and vice; it is by attaining Him that there remains nothing more to attain, it is by knowing Him that there remains nothing more to know.

Indeed, the attainment of the Highest Good means the realization of God, in whom is the culmination of knowledge,

the fulfillment of all desires, and the consummation of joy. When a person realizes God he discovers his essential unity with Him. He finds himself in Him. He is restored to his intrinsic divine nature. He is reinstated in his innate perfection. A seer does not see God apart from himself, not even as the greatest of all. God is not one of the many, but the inmost Self of one and all. He is the Reality underlying each and every phase of the manifold. He, the all-pervading Supreme Self, Pure Being-Consciousness-Bliss, is the unobserved observer of the order of phenomena. The imperfect world has perfection as its very basis and being. Though hidden in all physical objects, the self-effulgent Supreme Consciousness that God is shines even in the lowest orders of life more or less as sentiency, as the light of cognition. Consciousness is coextensive with livingness according to most biologists. It is the light that belongs solely to the cognizing self, the subject, and by no means to any part of the objective universe, physical or psychical. In human individuals the same Supreme Consciousness is clearly manifest as the knowing self distinct from the psychophysical system. This is why man alone is capable of realizing Him in the depth of his heart as the inmost Self beyond all limitations.

It is true that a devotee can see God in a particular form that represents divine power, love, or knowledge, or beauty, and is chosen by him to worship the Adorable One. God actually appears to him in the form of his Chosen Ideal. Such God-vision is not therefore a case of imagination or hallucination on the part of the devotee. Yet this is not the realization of God in the true sense. For after the vision, God may again disappear from the devotee's sight. But once a person realizes God as his very Self, as the Soul of all souls, he never loses sight of Him. Says Sri Krishna to Arjuna (Bhagavad-Gita, VI. 30):

> He who sees Me in all things and sees all things in Me never becomes separated from Me, nor do I become separated from him.

But even momentary God-vision can be a prelude to the timeless transcendental experience.

THOUGH the ultimate goal is the same for one and all, yet the ways differ according to the seekers' tendencies, capacities, and situation in life. Sri Krishna has enunciated to Uddhava a triple means to the attainment of the Highest Good: the yoga of work (karma), the yoga of devotion (bhakti), and the yoga of knowledge (jnana)—the threefold way to God-realization. The word "yoga" properly means spiritual discipline—a method of God-realization, in other words, Self-realization. None but a spiritual aspirant, none but a seeker of the Highest Good is eligible for the practice of yoga in the true sense. Sri Krishna thus speaks of the efficacy of the three yogas and their suitability for different grades and types of spiritual aspirants (Bhagavatam XI:20.6-8):

> The yogas of love, knowledge, and work have been given by me to men for their Highest Good. Except through these, there is no way to attain freedom. Of these, the yoga of knowledge is for those who desire nothing; for they, knowing every desire to be fraught with evil, have renounced work. Those who still have desires, and who are attached to work must follow the yoga of work. The yoga of love is successfully followed by those blessed mortals who take delight in Me and My word.

Those who are dutiful and virtuous and live a happy and contented life usually discern the inherent limitations of all temporal possessions and pleasures and turn to the search for

the eternal. It is on them that Sri Krishna enjoins the practice of karma yoga. Such spiritual aspirants as have worldly desires but are convinced of their futility and want to get rid of them and attain the Supreme Good must practice the yoga of work (karma). They should try to do their duties, domestic and social, without the ego-idea, surrendering the self to God, and giving up all claim to work and its results. It is the yoga of selfless work that prepares the mind for the practice of the yoga of devotion and the yoga of knowledge. It removes worldly attachment and intensifies the desire for the Supreme Good. As the mind is purified by the practice of karma yoga, the spiritual aspirant develops, according to his aptitude, a real interest either in the loving worship of the Personal God, or in the cultivation of Self-knowledge (that is, in the realization of the identity of the individual self with the Supreme Self). In the one case he acquires the competence for the practice of bhakti yoga (the path of devotion), and in the other for the practice of jnana yoga (the path of knowledge). Without the necessary preparation through karma yoga none can follow the path of devotion or the path of knowledge effectually. So says Sri Krishna to Uddhava (XI:20.9-11):

> Work one must until the heart has become tranquil and free from desires. Work must be performed until one has come to love Me and to take delight in My word. By doing one's duties for the sake of duty and performing them as services unto Me, having no selfish end in view, one becomes free from both the good and evil effects of work. The yoga of work frees the mind from all evil tendencies and purifies the heart. Being thus purified one attains pure knowledge or pure devotion to Me.

As indicated by Sri Krishna, bhakti yoga and jnana yoga are the two direct ways to the realization of God; karma yoga

is preparatory to either of them. Bhakti yoga is the approach to Saguna Brahman, the Personal God, possessed of all blessed qualities, who, though without form, has special manifestations in forms as well. This is the path of devotion, characterized by the seeker's feeling of a loving relationship with the Divinity. Jnana yoga is the approach to Nirguna Brahman, the attributeless impersonal Absolute Being. This is the path of knowledge, characterized by the seeker's apprehension of the essential identity of the individual self with the Supreme Self. It is a steep course. It does not suit the average spiritual aspirant, in whom the body-idea prevails. After the realization of Saguna Brahman through bhakti yoga, it is not so difficult for him to realize the same as Nirguna if he desires it.

It is to be noted that bhakti yoga is not wholly an emotional approach nor is jnana yoga purely an intellectual method. There is ample scope for intellect in bhakti yoga, just as there is ample scope for emotion in jnana yoga. Yet the one is called the way of devotion because devotion is predominant in it, and the other is called the way of knowledge, because intellect is predominant in it. Unaided by reason and understanding, devotion is liable to misconception, prejudice, error, and bigotry. Similarly, the path of knowledge without the love for Truth lacks animation and turns into a dry mechanical process. There must be an ardent longing in the seeker's heart for the realization of the Truth grasped by the intellect. Unless the heart moves with the intellect, his search for God will prove to be similar to academic research. Without whole-souled devotion to Truth the mind of the seeker cannot be tranquil and transparent enough for its revelation or immediate apprehension.

A follower of the path of devotion (bhakti) or a follower of the path of knowledge (jnana) does not necessarily have to give up his duties, although they are no longer im-

perative for his inner purification. Along with the practice of the yoga of bhakti or the yoga of jnana he can continue to perform them with complete self-renunciation. Karma in such a case is a form of devotion or knowledge. It promotes the aspirant's love for God and his knowledge of God and thus becomes a means of liberation. So says Sri Krishna (XI: 18.44-47):

> He who worships Me constantly and exclusively, through the performance of his duties, knowing My presence in all beings, soon attains to steadfast devotion to Me. O Uddhava, through his undying devotion he comes to Me, the great Lord of all beings, the originator and destroyer [re-absorber] of all, their cause, the Brahman. Having his mind thus purified by the performance of his duties, and knowing My Divinity, he becomes endowed with knowledge and realization and soon attains to Me. All his duty, consisting of specific rites, of those belonging to the castes and orders of life, if attended with devotion to Me becomes supreme and conducive to liberation.

Evidently, Sri Krishna does not consider raja yoga as a means of God-realization, since he clearly states that except through these three—the yogas of karma (work), bhakti (devotion), and jnana (knowledge) there is no way to attain freedom. But actually he does not exclude raja yoga from the methods of God-realization, inasmuch as its practical courses are included in the three other yogas mentioned by him. Patanjali's yogic method is based on the Samkhya system of philosophy with minor differences. So far as the philosophical background of his raja yoga is concerned, Vedanta disagrees on many points. But its practical methods of self-realization are mostly adapted to the Vedantic disciplines. Indeed, the eight steps of raja yoga are in a sense the common features of

the moral and spiritual courses followed by the seekers of God in most religions.

IN BOTH the messages Sri Krishna delineates the three methods of God-realization—the yogas of karma, bhakti, and jnana, which cover all the spiritual disciplines prevalent in different religions. As such, both messages have universal significance. But in the one he lays emphasis on karma yoga, while in the other on bhakti yoga. The reason is this: The first message was delivered to Arjuna, who was fit for the practice of karma yoga, while the last message was delivered to Uddhava, who was capable of practicing bhakti yoga. Though both messages are intended for all types of spiritual aspirants, yet the direct appeal of the one is to a follower of karma yoga, while the direct appeal of the other is to a follower of bhakti yoga. The different yogas suit spiritual aspirants of different grades as well as tendencies. They can therefore be practiced by the same spiritual aspirant according to his stage of development. The Vedantic teachers impart spiritual as well as moral instruction in view of the pupils' capabilities and situation in life. Their aim is to lead every individual at whatever level of life to the highest goal by progressive courses suited to his inner resources and environmental conditions. It may be asked in this context—why does Sri Krishna take pains to explain to either disciple other yogas than what he is ready for? The answer is: In order to fully explain the meaning and the application of any one of the yogas it is necessary to define its exact position in man's spiritual life in relation to other yogas. Moreover, these were occasions for the Divine Teacher to promulgate his message for different types of spiritual aspirants wherever they might be.

Arjuna was a man of heroic nature, distinguished for his

valor. He was the third of the five sons of King Pandu. As a leading member of the ruling (kshatriya) class, it was his primary duty to uphold justice, to subdue the wicked, to protect the virtuous, and to maintain peace and order. Accompanied by his four brothers, he had come to the battlefield as the commander-in-chief of the Pandava army in order to restore their kingdom forcefully seized by their wily and powerful cousins, the Kauravas. As he surveyed the huge array of troops of the belligerent powers ready to strike, he noticed on both sides his kinsmen and elders prepared to sacrifice their lives for the sake of the paltry kingdom. Commiseration for their lives on the one hand and, on the other, the stern call of duty to wage a just war regardless of their lives created a conflict in Arjuna's mind. But grief combined with sentimentality, proceeding from his attachment to his kith and kin and the venerable ones, prevailed over his sense of duty. Bewildered, he wanted to quit the battlefield and don the garb of a mendicant, not knowing how it would misfit his warlike heroic disposition. At this juncture he laid aside his weapons and begged instruction of Sri Krishna, who had assumed the role of his charioteer. The Divine Teacher pointed out his mistake and urged him to fight as a karma yogi, while explaining to him the full significance of each of the three yogas. After receiving the message Arjuna engaged in battle, free from all doubts and fears.

But the case of Uddhava was different. He was of a saintly disposition. He functioned as a state counselor, and not as a warrior. Moreover, he had outgrown all worldly attachment and developed pure devotion to God. He was capable of living the contemplative life of a devotee dedicated to the realization of the Divine Being, the one Self of all. His problem was not, as in the case of Arjuna, whether to fight or not to fight, but how to get free from all bondages and attain the Supreme Goal.

While Arjuna was urged to fight against the wrongdoers, Sri Krishna instructed Uddhava to follow the principle of non-resistance to evil and even illustrated this with a story. To quote him in part (XI:22.57,58):

> Even though scolded by the wicked, or insulted, ridiculed, calumniated, beaten, bound, robbed of his living or spat upon, or otherwise abominably treated by the ignorant—being thus variously shaken and placed in dire extremities, the man who desires his well-being should deliver himself by his own effort [through patience and discrimination].

Sri Krishna recognizes Uddhava's devotional nature and recommends to him the way of a lover of God (XI:11.29-32):

> Compassionate, with enmity to no creature, forbearing, with truth as his strength, of an unimpeachable mind, the same to all, benefactor of all beings; with his intellect unsullied by desires, a master of his organs, mild, pure, without possessions, without outward activity, with measured diet, a master of his mind, steady, having Me as his refuge, and meditative.
>
> Ever alert, of a balanced mind, with fortitude, a master of the sixfold evil [hunger and thirst, grief and infatuation, decay and death], seeking no name, yet giving honor to others, expert, friendly [to those who are happy], merciful [to those who are in misery], and illumined.
>
> He who knowing the merits and demerits [of duty and its opposite] gives up all his formal duties even as sanctioned by Me, and worships Me, is also the best among sages.

Throughout his last message Sri Krishna emphasizes the path of devotion. After hearing him, Uddhava, with all his doubts dispelled, with his misconceptions cleared, and fears chased

away, repairs, as instructed by the teacher, to a remote and sacred place in the solitude of the Himalayas, called Badarikashrama. It is situated near the source of the Alakananda, the second tributary of the Ganges in the high mountain ranges.

To Uddhava, Sri Krishna describes in detail the various practical courses for the cultivation of devotion. These form, broadly speaking, three distinct modes of worship: 1) physical, 2) verbal, and 3) mental. The physical methods of worship consist of service to the temple, service to the devotees of God, making pilgrimages, obeisance to the altar and to men of God, worshiping the Deity with offerings of flowers, incense, light, food, etc., the observance of festivals, and so forth. The verbal methods include speaking about God, reading and writing about Him, hearing about Him, chanting His glory, singing devotional songs, recounting the lives and deeds of the divine incarnations, saints, and seers, and the repetition of a sacred word or formula over and over again (inaudibly, semi-audibly, or audibly). The mental methods have such forms as remembering God at all times, self-surrender to the divine will, contemplation of God whenever possible, and the regular practice of meditation on Him. Physical and verbal methods prepare the ground for the mental method. They make the worshiper God-minded. No worshiper can very well remember God, or resign himself to God, or contemplate on Him, or can ever truly meditate on Him until he develops genuine interest in God as the sole and supreme object of love and worship.

EVEN a single method of worship followed by a seeker of God steadily from day to day, according to his capacity and condition of life, will invariably generate devotion within his heart. The cultivation of devotion is but the manifestation of

love for God that is latent within man. Each individual is a potential lover of God. He is a born seeker of Him and Him alone. Through his search for prosperity, for power, for happiness, for knowledge, or beauty, or love, a man is seeking, knowingly or unknowingly, rightly or wrongly, the very source of all these, the Ultimate One, where is the perfection of all that the human mind aspires after. What man really seeks is not something limited or imperfect, but its very perfection. Where else but in God, the Ideal, the Perfect One, does this exist? It is but the love for Him that, being misdirected, finds expression as greed or lust.

Of the various methods for the cultivation of devotion to God, the most efficacious is the association with the holy. He who gains devotion through holy association finds no difficulty in realizing God, declares Sri Krishna (XI:11.25, 48; 12.3):

> He who worships Me, attaining devotion for Me through association with sages, easily realizes My state taught by the sages.
>
> O Uddhava, there is almost no other efficient way except the bhakti yoga due to the association with sages, for I am the goal of the sages.
>
> It was through the association with saints, O stainless one, that many who were of an ambitious or indolent nature attained Me in different ages.

Thorough cleansing of the human mind is not possible by any other means than through devotion to God. Says Sri Krishna (XI:14.19, 21, 22):

> As fire kindled into a blaze burns the faggots to ashes, so, O Uddhava, devotion to Me totally destroys all sins.

> I, the dear Self of the pious, am attainable by devotion alone, which is the outcome of faith. Devotion to Me purges even the low-born of their congenital impurity.
>
> Piety joined to truthfulness and compassion, or learning coupled with austerity, never wholly purifies a mind which is devoid of devotion to Me.

As the alloy in gold cannot be extracted by any such means as washing, wiping or polishing it but through the process of smelting it, even so a man's subtle impressions of past karma buried in the subsoil of the mind cannot be eradicated by any physical, mental, or moral method but by the generation of devotion within his heart. In the words of Sri Krishna (XI: 14.33):

> As gold smelted by fire gives up its dross and gets back its real state, so the mind by means of systematic devotion to Me winnows off subtle impressions of past karma and attains to Me.

Sri Krishna praises the path of devotion and exhorts Uddhava to follow it (XI: 14.20; 19.19, 27; 20.32, 33):

> O Uddhava, neither yoga, nor knowledge, nor piety, nor study, nor austerity, nor renunciation captivates Me so much as a heightened devotion to Me.

> O pure-minded one, I have already expounded the philosophy of devotion to thee, but since thou hast special liking for it, I shall again describe the chief means to the attainment of devotion to Me.

> That religion is called the best which makes for devotion to Me; knowledge is the realization of the unity of Self.

> Whatever is acquired through works, austerities, knowledge, dispassion, yoga, or charity, or through any other means of well-being, My devotee easily attains to it through devotion to Me—aye, even heaven, or liberation, or My abode, should he care to have it.

Sri Krishna instructs graphically how a devotee by practicing meditation on God with form can realize the Formless One (XI:14.42-45):

> One should meditate on this form, concentrating the mind on all the features. The man of self-control should withdraw the organs from the sense-objects with the help of the mind, and with the intellect as guide direct the mind to My whole body. Then one should concentrate the mind—distributed all over My body—on one part, and think of the smiling countenance alone and nothing else.
>
> Drawing the mind which is concentrated on that, one should fix it on the Supreme Cause [the Lord as projecting the universe]. Then leaving that too, one should rest on Me [Pure Brahman divested of all attributes] and think of nothing whatsoever [state of samadhi]. With one's mind thus absorbed, one sees Me alone in oneself and sees oneself united to Me, the Self of all—like light united to light.

It is a rare privilege to be born as a human being. Self-realization is not possible in any other life. Sri Krishna stresses the importance of human life and its blessings (XI:20.17; 26.1):

> Getting the first and foremost requisite, viz. a human body, which is like a strong boat—so difficult to secure, yet attained somehow—with the teacher as its helmsman, and propelled by Me as by a favorable wind—with such means as these, the man who does not strive

to cross the ocean of transmigration—the rounds of birth and rebirth—commits suicide.

> Obtaining a human body, which gives a glimpse of My nature, a man, by practicing the religion of love for me, realizes me, the all-blissful Paramatman, who dwells in his heart.

The culmination of devotion is in seeing and worshiping God in all living beings. Here devotion is united with supreme spiritual vision. The highest devotion is inseparable from the highest knowledge. It is said in the Bhagavatam (XI:2.45-47):

> He who sees the divine Self in all beings and all beings in the divine Self is the best devotee of God. He who bears love to God, friendship to His devotees, kindness to the ignorant, indifference to his foes, is of the second best type, and he who faithfully worships God only in the image, and not His devotees or others, is a novice.

Just as God is worshiped in an image, even so He can be worshiped in a living being as the indwelling Self. In his last message Sri Krishna speaks highly of this form of worship, which has not been expressly stated by him in the Bhagavad-Gita. Says he to Uddhava (XI:29.12-15, 17-19, 22):

> With a pure mind one should observe in all beings as well as in oneself only Me, the Atman, who am both within and without, and all-pervasive like space.
>
> O great soul, he who, taking his stand on pure knowledge, thus regards and honors all beings as Myself, who has the same attitude towards a low-born one as to a Brahmana, towards a thief as to a supporter of the Brahmanas; towards a spark of fire as to the sun; and towards a ruffian as to a kind man; he is considered a sage.

> Ideas of rivalry, jealousy, pity and egoism quickly depart from a man who always thinks of Me in all men.
>
> One should worship thus in thought, word, and deed till one comes to look upon all beings as Myself.
>
> To such a man everything is Brahman, owing to the knowledge that comes of seeing the Atman in all. Seeing Brahman everywhere, he becomes free from doubts and all attachment.
>
> This looking upon all beings as Myself in thought, word, and deed is, to My mind, the best of all methods of worship.
>
> Herein lies the wisdom of the wise and the acumen of the intelligent, that in this very life they attain Me, the Real and Immortal, by means of that which is unreal and mortal.

That this mode of seeing and worshiping God in all beings is natural with the seers and the lovers of God who attain illumination has been affirmed by the Upanishads and by later Vedantic literature. Rare individuals, highly advanced in spiritual life, have also carried this idea into actual practice. But so far the seekers of God in general have not adopted this way of worship as a spiritual discipline. Such a course has been recommended for the first time by Sri Ramakrishna in the present age. "No, not kindness to living beings," urges he, "but service to God dwelling in them." Further he remarks:

> It is God who exists in all forms, though His manifestations differ.
>
> If God can be worshiped through a clay image, then why not through a man?

It was the genius of Swami Vivekananda to find new light in this precept of the Master and seek its practical application in modern life for the amelioration of man's condition

in every sphere. He exhorts the worshipers of God to follow this method:

> Look upon every man, woman, and every one as God. You cannot help anyone; you can only serve; serve the children of the Lord, serve the Lord Himself, if you have the privilege. If the Lord grants that you can help any one of His children, blessed you are; do not think too much of yourselves. Blessed you are that that privilege was given to you, when others had it not. Do it only as worship.
>
> You may invent an image through which to worship God, but a better image already exists, the living man. You may build a temple in which to worship God, and that may be good, but a better one, a much higher one, already exists; the human body.

In Swami Vivekananda's view all social work and the teaching of religion as well should be carried on in the spirit of worshiping God in man. For this purpose he established the Ramakrishna Math and Mission—a religious and philanthropic institution that has developed into a world-wide organization—the monastic and lay members of which are urged to render service to the ignorant, the needy, the distressed, and the diseased as the veritable worship of God dwelling in them.

SOME may hold that the message of Sri Krishna, which was delivered several millenniums ago, must be too old for the modern age; like many theories, views, and usages of former days, it must be antiquated. It is true that the world is progressing continually, particularly in physical and intellectual aspects. With the advancement of science and technology there have been tremendous changes in man's way of living and thinking. In this space-age we do not live in the same world as

our forbears did. Naturally, one may ask, "How can the teachings that applied to life centuries ago be adequate for the present age?"

But the message of Sri Krishna is basically eternal and universal. It cannot be obsolete, being grounded on fundamental truths that ever remain the same. These can be stated as follows:

1) The ever-changing manifold is sustained by the Changeless one, the all-pervading Self, we call God.

2) Man's restive psychophysical system is regulated by a central principle, his conscious immortal Self.

3) There is a kinship or unity between the individual self and the Supreme Self.

4) To realize this kinship or unity is the goal of life.

Moreover, the message of Sri Krishna has for its setting the common background of human life that undergoes no change. This is the same old drama of smiles and tears, of love and hate, of union and separation, of success and failure, that is going on the world over. From the primitive to the modern life the same old tragi-comedy has continued to be enacted in the East, in the West, in the North, in the South, in every home from the king's palace to the farmer's cottage. Despite man's marvelous achievements, despite all distinctions of color, creed, culture, position and power, human life is invariably a drama of birth, growth, decay and death. Notwithstanding this, there is within the heart of man a deep longing for the eternal, a constant cry for release from all confusion, all fear, all delusions, all bondage, all limitations. As long as this basic human situation remains unaltered, Sri Krishna's message will evoke irresistible response from the hearts of men and women at all times and in all places. It will serve as the beacon for erring human beings to find the way from darkness to light, from death to immortality, from bondage to freedom.

WHAT VEDANTA MEANS TO ME

DORINE SHEPHERD

WHAT does Vedanta mean to the householder in the American setting? Of course it must mean something different to each of us. Finding what Vedanta has to offer is an exciting and differing experience for each individual, whether he later becomes a devotee or an initiate, or remains simply a casual visitor.

I believe that only having undergone certain experiences by way of preparation, whether it is in this life, or in previous lives, will the individual be ready for Vedanta. This, I feel, is particularly true for the Westerner in the peculiar circumstance of secularism and materialism in which his culture is declining and in which he finds himself. One must be ready, as it were, to have the seed of Vedanta sprout. As for an exotic plant, the soil must have been carefully prepared.

This assumption granted, as it must be, and having found a hint of the possibilities of realizing, as St. Augustine put it "the City of God," what were my feelings on reaching the "suburbs?"

When I was a child, going forcibly to Sunday school, I felt over and over again the lack of learning about God. Rarely did the teacher mention him. Instead, we discussed current social problems. Where were the signposts of the guru or teacher to keep us on the right road that would lead us through the winding streets of the suburbs to the heart of the City

itself? They were lacking. Instead there was a growing void. Then, a few years older, and through the Lord's grace, I was twice led to the edge of experience, where I felt on the brink of a chasm where all reason for all existence was to be found. But without a guru's guidance, I did not know how to proceed past the very edge of the infinite possibility lying just beyond. Even so, I have remembered these experiences and the feelings which they produced, although they happened more than fifteen years ago.

Years followed upon each other; each containing something good and something "not so good." The sharp edge of the crusader's sword of youth became dulled under the grating roughness of reality. Then, during a visit to India, I learned about the Vedanta Society of Southern California. I lived not too very far from it, and at one time I had lived only a few blocks from the New York Center without knowing it existed! An elderly brahmin, trained in law, first mentioned the Hollywood Center to me. This fine person and others like him went out of their way to make a stranger welcome among them. In meeting him, and others like him, I felt myself at one in this atmosphere where God was a simple fact of everyday life. I had traveled fourteen thousand miles to hear of Vedanta.

When I came back to the States, I felt homesick for what I had left. I felt strange and a stranger in the country of my birth. When, after a few weeks, I entered the Hollywood Vedanta Temple, I knew at once that I had found again what I had left—the lovely place where God was accepted as a simple fact. In a sense, it is true that one "can't go home again." But I feel that in a far greater sense it is possible, and that I have indeed come home again, to God.

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD's forthcoming biography of Sri Ramakrishna has been serialized in *Vedanta and the West,* beginning in #136. Entitled *Ramakrishna and His Disciples,* it will be published in book form in the United States, England, and India.

SWAMI SARADANANDA (1865-1927) was one of the five monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna who had visited the West. He lectured on Vedanta in London and New York for two years before returning to India in 1898 to become the first secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. The Swami wrote the definitive life of Sri Ramakrishna, translated into English as *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master.*

"The Sympathy for Religions," reprinted from *Lectures, Literary and Religious,* was delivered by Swami Saradananda in the United States. Published by the Brahmavadin Press in 1898, it is reprinted in *Vedanta and the West* through the courtesy of the Ramakrishna Math, Madras.

SWAMI SATPRAKASHANANDA's article, which begins on page 43 of the present issue, is based on a lecture given by the Swami at the Santa Barbara Temple of the Vedanta Society of Southern California on August 26, 1962. English translations of the Sanskrit texts from the Bhagavatam are mainly from Swami Madhavananda's *The Last Message of Sri Krishna* and from Swami Prabhavananda's *The Wisdom of God (Srimad Bhagavatam).*

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makes me think I am singular. Getting rid of the idea of being separate and special is the one thing needful. But all efforts to expel the ego seem in vain. It refuses to be evicted.

Then how does this renunciation of ego take place? It seems to me that it occurs only as we open ourselves up to—and consciously sustain—discipline. Pain will burn out what we cannot throw out. This is why we must have a guru and the association of other devotees. Both will discipline us greatly!

A sad story concerns a young man who came to a certain teacher with the idea of becoming his disciple. The teacher accepted the applicant provisionally. In due course he asked the would-be student to do some menial task. "But," objected the young man, "I am a college graduate." The teacher withdrew the request courteously. But that was the end of this boy; he never became a disciple.

As for association with other devotees, the same kind of test occurs; and our response must be positive. New people come to Vedanta, enthusiastically expecting to share experiences pleasantly with others on the same path. After a while, perhaps, interpersonal strains develop. Trying episodes occur, and some fall away. Devotees would embrace a religion that emphasizes renunciation of the ego; but some of them, as soon as a little disciplining comes, retreat.

This will not do. The mother is slapping the child; and the child is clinging to the mother's knees, crying, "Mother, Mother." That is the way it must be. The one thing needful is: Don't give up; don't quit. Cling and be disciplined. This is the meaning of the emphasis placed by Ramakrishna's disciples on patience and perseverance.

If we will but cling to our teacher and other devotees, howling perhaps at the blows they give us, but not letting go, that which we cannot do for ourselves will be done for us. The ego we would renounce but cannot will be ground away.

Vedanta and the West

Vedanta teaches that man's real nature is divine; that it is the aim of man's life to unfold and manifest this divinity; and that truth is universal. Vedanta accepts all the religions of the world and reveres the great prophets, teachers, and sons of God, because it recognizes the same divine inspiration in all.

STUDENT'S NOTEBOOK No. 27

It is well known that renunciation is the main requirement for spiritual attainment. Many mystics have said so; books of spiritual instruction emphasize this point.

I do not doubt that this is true. But how does one do it? Efforts to divest myself of worldly desires and habits have convinced me that I cannot renounce at all. Like slops thrown out into a high wind, that which I would rid myself of blows back upon me. Burrs plucked from my sleeve transfer themselves to my glove.

Oh, if by renunciation one means giving away one's possessions, quitting one's job, or turning over to someone else one's proper responsibilities —yes, anybody can do that. But these are not necessarily the things that have to go; they just have to stop being important in our lives.

It is that vigorous entity called the ego that I must divest myself of—the monster inside me that

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CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD
The Story Continues

E. RAPHAEL MAROZZI
What Vedanta Means to Me

BLANCH PARTINGTON
Shanti Ashrama



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SEVENTY-FIVE CENTS

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THE STORY CONTINUES

CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD

The twenty-first chapter of a forthcoming book on Ramakrishna

THAT same evening, in accordance with Hindu custom, Sarada Devi sat down and began to remove her ornaments in token of her widowhood. Just as she was about to take off her gold bracelets, Ramakrishna appeared to her, looking as he had looked before his sickness came upon him. Taking her by the wrists, he asked, "why are you putting away the ornaments of a married woman? Do you really believe I'm dead?" Because of this vision, Sarada continued to wear her bracelets. Some days later Balaram Bose bought a piece of white cloth without a colored border, such as a widow should traditionally wear, and asked Golap Ma, one of Sarada's woman friends and a great devotee, to give it to her. Golap Ma found this commission painful and embarrassing; it was, in effect, a blunt reminder to Sarada of her loss. But when Golap Ma went to visit her, she saw that Sarada had already torn away a strip from the broad red border of her own wearing-cloth, making it very thin. Throughout the rest of her life, Sarada wore cloths with thin red borders, never plain white ones.

About a week after Ramakrishna's death, Naren and a young householder disciple named Harish were standing near the pond in the garden of the Cossipore house. It was eight

o'clock in the evening. Suddenly, Naren saw a draped and shining form approaching them along the path from the gate. He asked himself if this could be the Master, but said nothing to Harish, fearing that he was the victim of an hallucination. But, a moment later, Harish himself exclaimed in a hoarse whisper, "what's that?" So Naren shouted, "who's there?" Hearing the shout, some other disciples ran out of the house. But the luminous form vanished near a jasmine bush, within ten yards of where they stood.

Such were the spiritual reassurances. But the material outlook was far from reassuring. The lease on the Cossipore house was due to expire at the end of August. Ram Chandra Datta and most of the older devotees saw no reason why it should be renewed. It was quite unnecessary, they said, to go to the expense of providing a house for the young disciples. Why need they live together? Why shouldn't they return to their own homes and lead good pious Hindu lives, fulfilling their family duties?

One should not blame this group of householders for their attitude. They had no way of knowing that Ramakrishna had intended to found an order of monks; his instructions to the young disciples and his distribution of the monastic ocher cloths had been kept strictly private. Besides, the very idea of a monastic organization was foreign to Bengalis of that period; monks were thought of as individuals who wandered alone from place to place, never co-operating with each other.

Ram Chandra and his group held a meeting on August 19th and made plans for the immediate future. Since the Cossipore house was to be given up, there was nowhere for Sarada Devi to live. It was decided that she should go on a pilgrimage, which might ease her grief. Meanwhile, Ramakrishna's ashes were to be deposited in a garden-house at Kankurgachi, a village on the eastern outskirts of Calcutta. This

house had been bought by Ram Chandra, at Ramakrishna's suggestion, as a retreat for devotees who wished to meditate and perform kirtan; and it had been hallowed by visits from Ramakrishna himself. As for Ramakrishna's teaching, this was to be propagated in the conventional manner, by means of public lectures, books, and articles in magazines.

These plans were acceptable to the great majority of the devotees. They were not at all acceptable to Naren and the other disciples; nor to the very small minority of householders who stood by them, including M., Girish Ghosh, Balaram Bose and Surendra Nath Mitra. These still wished to see the Master's ashes enshrined on the bank of the Ganges—a project which had been at first favored by the majority and then given up because it would necessitate buying a plot of land. When it became certain that the ashes would be taken to Kankurgachi, Shashi and Niranjan determined on a trick. They secretly transferred most of the ashes to another vessel, leaving only enough in the original urn to allay suspicion. When the ceremony was held at Kankurgachi on August 23rd, the boys took part in it with apparent good will; Shashi himself carried the urn on his head. But meanwhile the rest of the ashes had been hidden in Balaram Bose's house. These ashes have now found their proper home beside the Ganges, within the shrine of the temple of Belur Math. A temple has also been built at Kankurgachi, to enshrine the copper urn.

Sarada Devi was unhappy when she heard of the dispute about the ashes; it seemed so trivial to her in the presence of death. She left for her pilgrimage to Vrindavan at the end of August, with Jogindra, Kali, Latu, Tarak, Golap Ma and some other women devotees. Rakhal went to live in Balaram's house. The rest of the boys had to return home temporarily, much against their will.

One evening early in September, while Surendra Nath

Mitra was meditating in his household shrine, Ramakrishna appeared to him and said, "what are you doing here? My boys are roaming about, without a place to live in—attend to that, before anything else." So Surendra hurried to Naren and promised to give as much money every month as he had given for the Cossipore house, provided that Naren could find a house where the Master's ashes and other relics could be worshiped regularly and where the monastic disciples could live, with the householder devotees visiting them from time to time.

After much hunting, Naren discovered a sufficiently cheap house near the Ganges at Baranagore. By the end of September, they had started using it. Gopal Sur was probably the first permanent inmate. The rest of the disciples came there during the daytime, and began to live there as soon as they were able to free themselves from family obligations.

The house had been deserted for some while before their arrival, because it was supposed to be haunted. It was said that many murders had been committed there. Cobras lived underneath it, and jackals were to be met with in the wilderness of the garden. The house itself was near to collapse. But the disciples were scarcely conscious of these disadvantages. For now they had their monastery and could live as their Master had taught them.

The boys slept on straw mats on the ground. Early in the morning, before daylight, Naren would get up and wake the others, singing, "awake, arise, all who would drink of the Divine Nectar!" Ramakrishna's bed was placed in the center of their shrineroom with his picture upon it. At the foot of the bed, on a low stool, stood an urn containing the ashes they had hidden at Balaram's, together with a pair of the Master's slippers. Here Shashi performed the daily worship.

The boys had no regular supply of money; sometimes they were near starvation. Often they ate nothing but boiled salt

rice and bitter herbs. They had only one presentable set of clothes in common, to be worn by anyone who had to go into the city. They called themselves "the *danas*"—the ghost-companions of Shiva—in token of their indifference to worldly ties and pleasures.

In the evenings, they would gather on the roof, where they argued eagerly for hours, about Ramakrishna, Shankara, Jesus of Nazareth, Hindu and European philosophy. Naren taught the others to sing and play musical instruments. The music would continue far into the night; and the neighbors complained without avail.

In December, Baburam was invited by his mother to come back for a short visit to his home in the village of Antpur, and to bring Naren with him. But, by the time they were to start, the party had grown to include Sarat, Shashi, Tarak, Kali, Niranjan, Gangadhar and Sarada Prasanna. They traveled down to Antpur by train, singing religious songs all the way. It will be remembered that Baburam's mother was herself a devotee of Ramakrishna; so she was delighted to have her son and his monastic brothers turn the visit into a retreat and devote many hours of every day to meditation.

One night, a fire of logs had been lighted in the compound. The disciples gathered around it and meditated for a long while. Then Naren began to tell them the story of Jesus, with emphasis on his great renunciation. He quoted the text from the Gospel according to St. Matthew: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." He spoke of the journeys of Christ's apostles. Then he called upon his brothers to become apostles likewise and to pledge themselves to renounce the world. This they all did, standing up in a body; taking the fire and the stars for their witnesses. Later, they discovered that this evening had been the Christian Christmas Eve, and

they felt that a more propitious time for their vow could not have been chosen.

It was after their return to Baranagore that the disciples assumed their monastic names, while performing the appropriate fire ceremony. Thenceforward they wore the ocher cloth of the monk. Kali (Abhedananda) has left an autobiography in which he states that the ceremony took place in the third week of January 1887. This date is probably correct, although there is a letter from Tarak (Shivananda) which seems to imply that it is much too early. It must also be remarked that M's account in the *Gospel* of his various visits to the monastery (during the first five months of 1887) always refers to the disciples by their original names. This may be due, however, to M's long-standing familiarity with them.

The first of M's visits was on February 21st. As soon as M. arrived, Tarak and Rakhal began to sing a song in praise of Shiva which Naren had just composed:

> See where Shiva dances—strikes both cheeks
> and they resound—*ba-ba-bom!*
> *Dimi-dimi-dimi* rolls his drum—his necklace
> swings, a rope of skulls!
> His wet locks are the Ganges waters—mighty
> his fire-darting trident!
> See his belt, a gleaming serpent—see the bright
> moon on his forehead!

Rakhal and Tarak danced as they sang. M. notes that Naren, Niranjan, Sarat, Shashi, Kali, Baburam and Sarada Prasanna were also living at the monastery at that time.

Later in the day, Naren returned from Calcutta, where he had been attending to family business. "How is your lawsuit going?" Kali asked him; and he replied sharply, "why should you bother about that?" He was in a sternly ascetic

mood, disgusted with the world. "Woman is the gateway to Hell," he said. "Everybody is under the control of Woman." This was not an anti-feminist outburst. Naren was using the word, as Ramakrishna had often used it, to symbolize male Lust.

That night, they celebrated the annual worship of Shiva, the Shiva Ratri, out of doors in the garden. The Shiva Ratri extends from sunset to sunrise, and consists of four periods of worship, during the four watches of the night. When it was over, they breakfasted on fruit and sweetmeats which Balaram had sent them.

Naren was now full of fun, and started to clown. Putting a sweet into his mouth, he stood motionless, mimicking Ramakrishna in samadhi. He fixed his eyes in an unblinking stare. One of the devotees, getting into the spirit of the joke, came forward and supported him, pretending to keep him from falling. Naren closed his eyes for a few moments, then opened them again. With the sweet still in his mouth, he drawled, like one who is just recovering consciousness, "I—am—all—right." The others laughed loudly.

ONE DAY, Rakhal's father came to the monastery and begged him to return home. "Why do you take the trouble to come here?" Rakhal asked him, not unkindly. "I'm very happy here. Please pray to God that you may forget me, and that I may forget you, too."

ON May 7th, Naren came to visit M. at his home in Calcutta. He told M: "I don't care about anything. You see, even now while I'm talking to you, I feel like getting up at this very moment and running away." Then, after a short silence, he

said, "I'm going to fast until death, that I may realize God." "That is good," said M., perhaps with some amusement at Naren's impetuosity. "For God one can do anything."

Naren: "But suppose I can't control my hunger?"

M: "Then eat something, and begin fasting again."

They drove out to Baranagore together, to find that Sarada Prasanna had left the monastery during Naren's absence. No one knew where he had gone. Naren was vexed and said that Rakhal should have forbidden him to leave. But Rakhal had been away when it happened, visiting the Dakshineswar Temple. So Naren scolded Harish, saying, "I'm sure you must have been giving one of those lectures of yours, standing with your feet apart! Couldn't you have stopped him?" Harish said meekly that Tarak had asked Sarada Prasanna not to go, but without effect. "You see what troubles I have!" Naren exclaimed to M., "I'm involved in maya, even here! Who knows where this boy is!" However, it was later found that Sarada had left a letter behind him. He wrote that he was going to Vrindavan on foot. "It is very dangerous for me to live here. My mind is going through a change. I used to dream about my parents and other relatives, then I dreamed about Woman, the embodiment of maya. Twice I've been through the suffering of having to go back home. So I am taking myself far away. The Master once told me, 'your people at home are apt to do anything; never trust them.' "

By this time, Rakhal had returned. Hearing the contents of Sarada's letter, he said, "that's the real reason for his going away. He once told me, 'Naren often goes home to look after his mother, brothers and sisters. And he directs the family lawsuit. I'm afraid I may follow his example and start going home too.' " At this, Naren remained silent, as if ashamed.

Then they began to talk of making pilgrimages. Rakhal was in favor of doing this. "What have we achieved by staying

here?" he said, "nothing!" But Naren disagreed, "what will you achieve by wandering around? You're always talking about attaining knowledge of God through discrimination. As if one ever could!"

"Then why have you renounced the world?" a devotee asked Naren. "Must we go on begetting children, just because we haven't realized God?" said Naren, "what are you talking about?"

One of the other disciples, who was lying on the floor, started to pretend that he was in agony, because of his separation from God. He groaned, "why should I go on living? Oh—this pain—I can't stand it! Please—give me a knife!"

"There it is," said Naren, pretending to take him quite seriously, "just stretch out your hand." And they all laughed.

Some days later, Sarada Prasanna reappeared as suddenly as he had left. His pilgrimage had not been a success, for he had gone no farther than Konnagar, a small town only a few miles distant. However, he had stopped a night at the Dakshineswar Temple and seen Pratap Chandra Hazra, who was giving himself the airs of a paramahamsa, now that he felt secure from Ramakrishna's ridicule. Hazra had even had the effrontery to ask Sarada Prasanna, "what do you think of me?" When Sarada did not answer, Hazra demanded tobacco. He seemed to expect to be waited on.

Sarada told all this to M., with humorous simplicity. When M. asked him what he had taken with him on the journey, he answered, "Oh, one or two pieces of cloth and a picture of the Master. . . . I didn't show the picture to anyone."

Shashi's father came to the monastery, wanting to take him home. He had done this before. Shashi dreaded these scenes,

for he loved his parents. On this occasion, he fled through another door and Shashi's father had to be content to talk to M:

Shashi's Father: "It's Naren who's the cause of all this trouble. He's the one who's in charge here."

M: "No one is in charge here. They're all equals. What could Naren have to do with it? He couldn't make a man renounce home against his own will. We householders—we haven't been able to renounce our homes, have we?"

Shashi's Father: "But what you are doing is the right thing. You are serving both God and the world. Why can't one practice religion in your way? That's just what we want Shashi to do. Let him live at home. He can still come here now and then. You have no idea how his mother weeps for him."

M. felt sad and said nothing.

ONE AFTERNOON, a young devotee named Rabindra burst in upon them, wild-eyed, with a torn wearing-cloth, having run all the way from Calcutta barefoot. Ramakrishna had been fond of Rabindra but had told him, "you will have to go through a few more experiences." And now Rabindra had just discovered that the woman he was in love with was a prostitute. "She's a traitor!" he kept repeating. "I shall never go back. I shall stay with you here."

They advised him to calm himself by bathing in the Ganges. Then one of them took him to a nearby cremation-ground to look at the corpses and meditate on the impermanence of the world.

Rabindra spent that night at the monastery. Next day, he bathed again in the Ganges. When he returned from the river with his wearing-cloth wet, Naren whispered slyly to M:

"It would be good to initiate him into sannyas, right at this moment." Sarada Prasanna brought Rabindra a dry cloth to change into; it was ocher. "Now he has put it on—" Naren exclaimed, "the cloth of renunciation!"

But Rabindra did not become a sannyasin, after all.

SOMETIMES, Naren would seem to argue against the existence of God; then again, he would sing devotional songs and shed tears. The others told him he was inconsistent. He merely smiled.

M. describes an evening on which one of the disciples read from the life of Sri Chaitanya. Perhaps something in the language of the story struck him as antiquated and funny; his tone became sarcastic. At once, Naren snatched the book from his hand, crying, "that's how you spoil the thing that really matters!" Then he read a chapter which told how Chaitanya gave his love to everyone, from brahmin down to untouchable.

A Disciple: "I say that one person can't give love to another."

Naren: "The Master gave it to me."

A Disciple: "Are you sure?"

Naren: "What do you know about love? You belong to the servant class. You should all serve me and massage my feet—instead of flattering yourselves you can understand anything. Now go and get me a pipe."

A Disciple: "I'll do no such thing!" *(General laughter)*

M. (to himself): "The Master certainly endowed all these brothers with spirit. It's no monopoly of Naren's. Can one possibly renounce the world without it?"

MEANWHILE, at Vrindavan, Sarada Devi was becoming more and more completely the being whom later everyone was to

address as Holy Mother. To call her "Mother" was no mere expression of respect. All those who met her often became aware of a maternal quality in her. It was not only Ramakrishna's disciples who were her sons; as she grew older she seemed to inhabit a world made up entirely of her children, and to be genuinely unable, like a mother, to see faults in any of them. The shy young wife of Ramakrishna, who had hidden herself even from his devotees, now became accessible to all who needed her. Yet she acquired no air of authority, no imposing presence. It would even happen that a newcomer mistakenly prostrated herself before Golap Ma her disciple, rather than before this ordinary-looking woman whom Ramakrishna himself had jokingly described as "a cat hidden under the ashes." But the Mother's devotees were overwhelmed by just this very simplicity. Nivedita writes, "to myself, the stateliness of her courtesy and her great open mind are almost as wonderful as her sainthood."

At first, the Holy Mother was most unwilling to assume the role of a spiritual teacher. She only began to do so after she had been repeatedly prompted by Ramakrishna in her visions. Again and again she was made conscious of his presence. He appeared at the window of the train carriage in which she was traveling to Vrindavan, and told her not to lose his gold amulet. He appeared to her after her arrival at Vrindavan, saying, "here I am—where did you think I'd gone to? I've only passed from one room into another." She had not been long in Vrindavan before he told her to initiate Jogindra. She could not bring herself to do this, however, until he had appeared to her three more times, telling her the mantra she must use, and until she had found out that Jogindra had also been visited by Ramakrishna and been told to take initiation from her.

In August 1887, the Holy Mother returned to Calcutta.

By now, the monks of Baranagore were setting out on the pilgrimages which were to separate them from each other for months and even years. Only a few of them were to be found at the monastery at any one time. The Holy Mother was worried about this restlessness of her sons; she feared that the Order would dissolve itself. That it did not do so was due, no doubt, to the extraordinarily strong bond of affection between the brothers, to the inspiration given them by Naren and Rakhal even when they were not present, and to the very bohemianism of their monastic life. Most organizations are held together by their rules and therefore dissolved when the rules are broken; but, in this case, there were no rules to break! Also the devotion of Shashi (Ramakrishnananda) to the Master's relics and his performance of the daily worship before them created a powerful spiritual focus at Baranagore; he, at least, never left the monastery. And, within the next few years, a group of new disciples gathered there; young men who had never known Ramakrishna and were to become, so to speak, the second-generation swamis of the Order. In November 1891, the monastery was moved to Alambazar, halfway between Baranagore and Dakshineswar. This house was in much better condition than the other, but it was also regarded as haunted and therefore also cheap.

NAREN and Rakhal both wandered widely about India, sometimes together, more often alone. As was to have been expected, Rakhal had his greatest spiritual experiences in Vrindavan, the scene of Krishna's childhood. At the beginning of 1895, Rakhal finally returned to the monastery, because he felt that it was his duty to serve the Order. Naren had always praised Rakhal's loyalty. "Others may desert me," he used to say, "but Raja will stand by me till death."

In July 1890, Naren resolved to set out on a pilgrimage of indefinite length, even though this meant breaking the last ties of obligation to his family. He went to say good-bye to the Holy Mother and receive her blessing. "If I can become a man in the true sense of the word, then I shall return," he told her. "Otherwise, never." "You must not say that!" the Mother exclaimed, in distress. So Naren, to reassure her, answered, "by your grace I shall be back soon." She urged him to say good-bye also to Bhuvaneswari, but he answered, "you are my only mother now." They were not destined to see each other again for seven years.

At first, Naren traveled with some of his brother monks; then he parted from them and went on alone to Delhi, using one of the names he assumed to avoid recognition. In Delhi he was recognized, nevertheless; so he left again hurriedly. This was the beginning of three years of wanderings which took him through Rajputana down into western India and then southward, by way of Bombay, Poona, Kolhapur and Bangalore. He mixed and talked and ate with all conditions of people; rajas, untouchables, college professors, peasant farmers, Moslems, Jains. He saw the abject poverty and filth and near-starvation in which the many lived, and the dazzling wealth of the very few. He saw crude superstition which disgusted him, true faith which inspired him, apathy and ignorance and laziness which made him furiously impatient, petty jealousies and feuds which drove him to despair. He saw a great people disunited and degraded; but he saw also the vast potential strength of that people and the possibility of a renaissance which would be more splendid than all the ancient splendors of its history. He saw, almost with clairvoyance, what India might one day be, and what she might have to offer to the rest of the world.

Naren knew no language but the truth. He spoke his mind fearlessly to everyone he met. He rebuked the Maharaja of

Alwar for wasting his time shooting tigers with the English, neglecting his duties to his subjects. The Maharaja, who affected western ideas, said to Naren that it was ridiculous to show reverence to images and pictures, which were nothing but stone, clay, metal or paint. Naren's reply was to tell the Prime Minister to take down the Maharaja's picture from the wall and spit on it. He told the Maharaja of Mysore that he was surrounded by flatterers. When some orthodox brahmins asked him what he considered the most glorious period in Hindu history, he answered, "when five brahmins used to polish off one cow," and he went on to say that Indians ought to give up vegetarianism if they were to compete with other nations in this modern age.

Naren shocked and offended many, but his honesty won him many friends, some of them powerful. The Maharaja of Mysore and his Prime Minister begged him to choose any gift he fancied, the costlier the better. Naren took a tobacco pipe from one and a cigar from the other. The Raja of Ramnad and the Raja of Khetri both urged him to go and speak for Hinduism and India in the West; offering to pay his expenses. They told him about the Parliament of Religions which was to be held in Chicago in 1893 during the World's Columbian Exposition (commemorating the four-hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America by Columbus). They wanted Naren to attend the Parliament as the Hindu delegate. But Naren could give them no definite answer. He was not yet sure of his duty.

And so he continued his journey southward, usually on foot and sharing the food of the very poor, sometimes faint with hunger, until he reached the southernmost point of India, Cape Comorin. When he had worshiped in the temple there, he looked out over the sea and saw a rock. Something moved him to swim out to it, despite the danger of sharks, and there

he sat for a long while, deep in thought. It was one of those occasions in life on which an individual pauses to take his bearings, to become conscious of his destiny, perhaps to accept decisions already subconsciously made but not yet recognized. If the individual is a Naren, such an occasion may later come to be regarded as historic. Looking ahead from that day at Cape Comorin—it was sometime in the winter of 1892—we may see not only its direct relation to certain future events, Naren's two journeys to the West and the founding of the Ramakrishna Mission, but also its indirect influence on the thoughts and lives of India's future leaders, on Gandhi and on the men who followed him.

On the rock at Cape Comorin, Naren had a very powerful emotional experience; a vision of what he and his brothers could do to help India. This experience led him to some practical conclusions which governed his future actions. It will be best to present these conclusions here in non-emotional terms and as simply as possible:

India's greatness is fundamentally religious, but religion is not what India needs in her present state of weakness. India needs education, to enable her to help herself. However, this education will be worthless unless it is directed by people who are living in the spirit of Indian religion, as demonstrated by Ramakrishna; people who have trained themselves in the sciences of the West without losing that spirit; people who have renounced all worldly ties and advantages and dedicated themselves utterly to service. Such people must, obviously, be monks, working together within an organization. Who should provide the funds for this organization? The nations of the West—because India has something equally valuable to offer them in exchange; the spirit of her religion. The West is dangerously weakened by a lack of spirituality, just as India is weakened by a lack of food. The nations of the West must be

persuaded that, if India collapses, they too will collapse. When once they truly believe this, they will stop trying to exploit India. The exchange of values will begin and the whole world will benefit from it.

ON May 31, 1893, Naren sailed from Bombay on board a ship bound for Vancouver, via Colombo, Hong Kong and Japan. After some further hesitations, he had decided to attend the Parliament of Religions. Devotees had contributed money. The Raja of Khetri had given him an orange silk robe, an ocher turban and a first-class steamer ticket. The Raja had also suggested a new monastic name to him and he had agreed to assume it; henceforth he became Swami Vivekananda.

When Vivekananda arrived in Chicago in mid-July he found that the opening of the Parliament had been postponed until September. He had barely enough money to support him through this unforeseen interim; some advised him that he would be able to live more cheaply in Boston, so he took a train on there. During the journey he met a lady who invited him to stay at her home, a farm near Holliston, Massachusetts. Here, he immediately became a local celebrity. He gave talks to church and social groups in the neighborhood. He was taken for a raja, because of his commanding appearance. Children laughed at his turban. Newspapers misspelled his name; their weirdest version of it being "Sivanei Vivcksnanda." Another lady who met him at this time writes, "on Sunday [he was] invited to speak in the church and they took up a collection for a heathen college to be carried on on strictly heathen principles—whereupon I retired to my corner and laughed until I cried. He [Vivekananda] is an educated gentleman, knows as much as anybody. Has been a monk since he was eighteen. Their vows are very much our vows, or rather the vows of a

Christian monk. Only Poverty with them means poverty. . . . He is wonderfully clever and clear in putting his arguments. . . . You can't trip him up nor get ahead of him."

From the first, Vivekananda seems to have adapted himself perfectly to his new surroundings. He inspired, charmed, shocked and amused his hearers; he never played down to them or spared their feelings by modifying his language. "Ah, the English!" he would exclaim, "only just a little while ago they were savages. The vermin crawled on the ladies' bodices." He answered criticisms of Hinduism with equally blunt criticisms of Christianity. Yet his attitude toward America was eagerly receptive. He was quick to learn and praise. When he had been taken to visit a prison near Boston, his reaction was as follows:

> How benevolently the inmates are treated, how they are reformed and sent back as useful members of society—how grand, how beautiful, you must see to believe! And oh, how my heart ached to think of what we think of the poor, the low, in India. They have no chance, no escape, no way to climb up. They sink lower and lower every day.

When Vivekananda talked like this, he was not just being broad-minded. There was much in his nature which was akin to the American spirit; for this very reason he was India's ideal ambassador. He was later to write to a friend:

> I love the Yankee land—I like to see new things. I do not care a fig to loaf about old ruins. . . . I have too much vigor in my blood for that. In America is the place, the people, the opportunity for everything new.

EARLY in September, his hosts paid his fare back to Chicago, giving him the address of the committee which was in charge

of looking after the delegates to the Parliament. This address Vivekananda lost en route—he was extremely careless in such matters. Rather than hunt through a street directory, it seemed easier to him to revert to the natural behavior of an Indian monk in India; he slept in a boxcar in the railway freight yards, woke "smelling fresh water" (as he put it), followed his nose down to the lakeside, knocked at the doors of some wealthy homes and was rebuffed, and finally reached Dearborn Avenue where he sat down, resigning himself to the will of God. Very soon, a front door opened and a lady came out to him—having already guessed from his clothes why he was in the city. She invited him in to shave and have breakfast and afterwards took him to the headquarters of the committee. "What a romantic deliverance!" said Vivekananda. "How strange are the ways of the Lord!"

When the Parliament opened, on the morning of September 11th, Vivekananda immediately attracted notice as one of the most striking figures seated on the platform. Though powerfully built, he was not above medium height, but he seems always to have created the effect of bigness, together with a masculine grace of movement, often compared to that of a lion or tiger. Others commented on his look of being "inly-pleased"; there was a humorous watchful gleam in his eyes which suggested an amused detachment of spirit. Everyone responded to the deep bell-like beauty of his voice; certain vibrations of it caused a kind of psychic excitement among his hearers. But neither his appearance nor his voice can fully explain the astonishing reaction of the audience to his first speech.

During the first morning's session, when his turn came to speak, he had excused himself, asking for more time. (Later, in a letter to friends in India, he confessed that he had been suffering from stage fright.) But, that afternoon, he rose to his

feet. In his deep voice, he began, "Sisters and Brothers of America"—and the entire audience, many thousand people, clapped and cheered wildly for two whole minutes. Hitherto, the audience had certainly been well-disposed; some of the speakers—including an archbishop of the Greek Church, a member of the Brahmo Samaj, a Confucian and a Buddhist—had been greeted enthusiastically and all of them with adequate politeness. But nothing like this demonstration had taken place. Perhaps the vast majority of those present hardly knew why they had been so moved. A crowd has its own kind of telepathy and this one must have been somehow aware that it was in the presence of that most unusual of all beings, a man whose words express exactly what he means and is. When Vivekananda said, "Sisters and Brothers of America" he literally meant that he regarded the American women and men in front of him as his sisters and brothers; the false old oratorical phrase became simple truth.

As soon as they would let him, the Swami continued his speech. It was a short one, pleading for universal tolerance and stressing the common basis of all religions. When it was over, there was more thunderous applause. A lady who was present recalled later, "I saw scores of women walking over the benches to get near him, and I said to myself, 'Well, my lad, if you can resist that onslaught you are indeed a God!' " She need not have been anxious. Such onslaughts were resisted by Vivekananda almost daily during his subsequent two years of lecturing in America. By the time the Parliament had come to an end, he had become, beyond comparison, its most popular speaker. There was no longer any problem as to how he could continue his mission to the West; he was in demand everywhere, and a lecture bureau was ready to organize his tours.

In those days, when the Frontier was still a living mem-

ory, one did not have to go far from the great cities to find oneself in the pioneer world of the tent show. Politicians, philosophers, writers, the great Sarah Bernhardt herself—all were treated more or less as circus attractions. Vivekananda was a Hindu swami; therefore, in the eyes of the public, he was some kind of a freak. He might hope for applause, but he could expect no consideration for his privacy. He had to face the crudest publicity, the most brutal curiosity, hospitality which was lavish but ruthless and exhausting. This circus-life exhausted him eventually and wrecked his health; but, for the time being, he was equal to it and even seemed to enjoy it.

He offended many by his outspokenness. "I have emptied entire halls!" he used to say, with smiling satisfaction. And no wonder! To the ears of rigid fundamentalists, his teaching of Man's essential divinity must have sounded utterly blasphemous. His favorite story was of a lion who had been raised among sheep and who therefore imagined himself to be a sheep, until another lion showed him his true image reflected in a pool. "And you are lions," he would tell his hearers, "you are pure, infinite and perfect souls. . . . He, for whom you have been weeping and praying in churches and temples, is your own Self." He preached self-reliance, individual search and effort. He warned against too great dependence on the words of others, no matter how divinely inspired. "Obey the Scriptures until you are strong enough to do without them. Every man in Christian countries has a huge cathedral on his head, and on top of that a book. The range of idols is from wood and stone to Jesus and Buddha." "Show by your lives that religion does not mean words, or names, or sects, but that it means spiritual realization. Only those who have attained to spirituality can communicate it to others, can be great teachers of mankind. They alone are the powers of light."

He spoke little about the Hindu cults of Rama, Kali,

Vishnu or Shiva, and it was only occasionally that he revealed that he, too, had a personal cult—of the Master whom he regarded as a divine incarnation. After he had returned to India from America, he used to say, "if I had preached the personality of Ramakrishna, I might have converted half the world; but that kind of conversion is short-lived. So instead I preached Ramakrishna's principles. If people accept the principles, they will eventually accept the personality."

FROM 1893 to 1895, Vivekananda lectured in various parts of the eastern and central United States, appearing frequently in Chicago, Detroit, Boston and New York. By the spring of 1895, he was very tired and in poor health; but he made light of it. "Are you never serious?" one of his students asked him, reproachfully. "Oh yes," he answered, "when I have the belly-ache." He could even laugh at the many cranks and so-called healers who unmercifully pestered him, hoping to profit by his reflected glory. In his letters he refers to "the sect of Mrs. Whirlpool" and to a certain mental healer "of metaphysical, chemico, physical-religioso, whatnot." At the same time, he met and made an impression on people of a more serious kind; students who were prepared to dedicate the rest of their lives to the practice of his teaching. In June 1895, he was invited to bring a dozen of these to a house in Thousand Island Park on the St. Lawrence River. Here, for nearly two months, he taught them informally; and this was probably the happiest part of his first visit to America.

In August, he sailed for France and England, returning to New York in December. In April 1896 he returned to England, on what was to be the first stage of his journey home. Vivekananda later admitted that he had arrived in England with very mixed feelings; this was the stronghold of

the exploiters of his country. But the England which he personally experienced proved to have an altogether different spiritual climate. Even after his first brief visit, he wrote that his work had been successful beyond all expectations. "Every enterprise in this country takes some time to get started. But once John Bull sets his hand to a thing, he will never let it go. The Americans are quick, but they are somewhat like straw on fire, ready to be extinguished."

From England, Vivekananda took with him two of his most faithful and energetic disciples, Captain and Mrs. Sevier —also J. J. Goodwin, an Englishman whom he had first met in America and who had become the recorder of his lectures and teachings. Later he was to be followed to India by Margaret Noble (Nivedita), whom he had met in London during his first visit. These western disciples all worked devotedly, in their different ways, for Indian education and freedom.

After leaving England and traveling for a while through Europe, Vivekananda landed in Ceylon on January 15, 1897. From there on, his journey to Calcutta was a triumphal progress; he was received with flags, bands, incense, rose water, flowers and the cheers of thousands. The Raja of Ramnad helped to draw his carriage through the streets and erected a forty-foot column in his honor. At one station, where no stop was scheduled, his admirers threw themselves down on the tracks and would not move until they had seen him. Perhaps Vivekananda's countrymen exaggerated the extent of his material success in America and Europe. But they quite rightly regarded his visit to the West as a psychological triumph far exceeding in its proportions the mere amount of money he had collected for his cause or the number of disciples he had made. Indeed, one may claim that no Indian before Vivekananda had ever persuaded Americans and Englishmen to accept him on such terms—not as a subservient ally, not as an

avowed opponent, but as a sincere well-wisher and friend, equally ready to teach and to learn, to ask for and to offer help.

In the midst of all the adulation, Vivekananda never lost his emotional balance; never forgot who he was, the disciple of Ramakrishna and the equal brother of his fellow monks. (When they had read about his American lectures in the newspapers, they had at first supposed this remarkable swami to be a stranger to them—for they did not know of Naren's new monastic name!) Brahmananda was the first of the Order to welcome him, placing a garland of flowers around his neck. Vivekananda bowed and touched Brahmananda's feet, quoting a saying from the Scriptures, "the son of the guru is to be regarded as the guru himself." Brahmananda returned the act of reverence, with another quotation, "one's elder brother is to be revered as one's father." Vivekananda was then taken to the Alambazar monastery, where he handed over to Brahmananda all the money which had been given him for the work of the future Ramakrishna Mission. Having done this, he was obliged to ask for a few pennies in order to take the ferryboat back across the Ganges. Henceforward, he insisted on sharing the poverty of his brothers.

On May 1, 1897, Vivekananda addressed a meeting of the monks and householder devotees of Ramakrishna, putting before them his plans for an organized Ramakrishna Mission. In brief, they were as follows:

The Mission will preach the truths which Ramakrishna preached and demonstrated in his own life. It will help others to put these truths into practice in their own lives, for their temporal, mental and spiritual advancement. It will train men to teach such knowledge or sciences as are conducive to the material and spiritual welfare of the masses. It will establish centers for monastic training and social work in different parts

of India. It will also send trained members of the Order to countries outside India, to bring a better relation and a closer understanding between them. Its aims will be purely spiritual and humanitarian; therefore it will have no connection with politics.

It will be seen that Vivekananda's concept of a Mission actually includes a Math (monastery); the two are interrelated. The Swami was fond of quoting Ramakrishna's words, "religion is not for empty stomachs"; but this never meant that he was exalting social service above spiritual training. The stomachs must first be filled, certainly; but the fillers of the stomachs must first be trained to fill them, and trained spiritually as well as technically. Vivekananda knew very well that no one can go on performing the tedious, discouraging tasks of social service unless he has a very powerful ideal to sustain him.

Thus it has come about that the Ramakrishna Order has established its monasteries and social service centers—including hospitals, dispensaries, colleges, schools of agriculture and industry, libraries and publishing houses—side by side. The headquarters of the Math and the Mission are situated in the same compound, at Belur; and the trustees of both are the same. Legally, they are separate entities, but only for the convenience of administrative planning and the allotment of funds. The monks of the Order keep exchanging one way of life for the other, when this is possible; spending some time in meditation and solitude, and then taking up administrative duties at one of the Mission centers. The Order has at the present time over a hundred centers in different parts of India and the neighboring Asian lands. In addition, there are some centers in the West for the study and practice of Vedanta Philosophy and Ramakrishna's teachings; ten of them in the United States, one in England, one in France, and one in Argentina.

The Ramakrishna Order has always obeyed Vivekananda's injunction to keep itself politically uninvolved. During the 1920's, when the struggle with England had become acute, it nevertheless refused its official sanction to Gandhi's Non-Co-operation Movement—and this despite the fact that nearly all of its members must have had a strong sympathy for his cause. Many of Gandhi's followers criticized the Order harshly for its attitude; but Gandhi himself never did so. He understood that a religious body which supports a political cause—no matter how noble and just—can only compromise itself spiritually and thereby lose that very authority which is its justification for existence within human society. In 1921, Gandhi came to the Belur Math on the anniversary of Vivekananda's birthday and paid a moving tribute to him, saying that the Swami's writings had taught him how to love India even more.

In America and in England, Vivekananda had contrasted Indian spirituality with Western materialism. In India, we find him attacking Indian sloth and lack of unity, national pride and personal courage; and praising American efficiency and British tenacity and national spirit. Of the English, he would say that "they are, of all nations, least jealous of each other and that is why they dominate the world. They have solved the secret of obedience without slavish cringing—great freedom with law-abidingness." Turning on his Indian followers, he would cry, "you have not the capacity to manufacture a needle and you dare to criticize the English! Fools! Sit at their feet and learn their arts and industries. Without the necessary preparation, what's the use of just shouting in Congress?" And again, "what we want is strength, so believe in yourselves. It is a man-making religion we want. Nationalism of purely agitational pattern cannot carry us far; with patriotism must be

associated a real feeling for others. We must not forget that we have also to teach a great lesson to the world. But the gift of India is the gift of religion and philosophy."

Vivekananda was the last person to worry about formal consistency. He almost always spoke extempore, fired by the circumstances of the moment, addressing himself to the condition of a particular group of listeners, reacting to the intent of a certain question. That was his nature, and he was supremely indifferent if his words of today seemed to contradict those of yesterday. As a man of enlightenment, he knew that the truth is never contained in arrangements of sentences. It is within the speaker himself. If what he is, is true, then words are unimportant. In this sense, Vivekananda is incapable of self-contradiction.

However, it is not at all surprising that he has been much misunderstood; that parts of his message, taken out of context, have been presented as the whole. Even some of his brother monks, at the time of the founding of the Mission, were afraid that he was deviating from Ramakrishna's aims. And there have been some, in much more recent times, who have claimed him as a socialist and a nationalist revolutionary. They wish, in all sincerity, to honor Vivekananda as a great Indian patriot, and they are right as far as they go. But their statue of him would have to be a headless torso without arms or legs; Vivekananda without Ramakrishna.

THE MISSION went into action as soon as it had been established, taking part in famine and plague relief and beginning to found hospitals and schools. Vivekananda became its General President and Brahmananda the head of the Calcutta center. Then the first buildings were erected on the land which the Order had purchased at Belur, and the Math was opened there, in January 1899.

In June 1899, Vivekananda sailed for his second visit to the West. He spent most of it in America, training small groups in different parts of the country and opening centers at places where devotees had urgently requested him to do so. He returned to India late in 1900, a sick and exhausted man. He said frequently that he did not expect to live much longer. But he seemed calmer and happier than he had ever been; quite released from the driving anxious energy of his earlier crusading years. His mood is beautifully described in a letter he wrote to one of his disciples, in April 1900:

> I am well, very well mentally. I feel the rest of the soul more than that of the body. The battles are lost and won. I have bundled my things and am waiting for the Great Deliverer. . . .
>
> After all, Joe, I am only the boy who used to listen with rapt wonderment to the wonderful words of Ramakrishna under the banyan at Dakshineswar. That is my true nature—works and activities, doing good and so forth, are all superimpositions. Now I again hear his voice. . . . Now only the voice of the Master calling.—"I come, Lord, I come." . . .
>
> I am glad I was born, glad I suffered so, glad I did make big blunders, glad to enter peace. I leave none bound, I take no bonds. Whether this body will fall and release me or I enter into freedom in the body, the old man is gone, gone for ever, never to come back again!
>
> The guide, the guru, the leader, the teacher, has passed away; the boy, the student, the servant, is left behind. . . .
>
> Behind my work was ambition, behind my love was personality, behind my purity was fear, behind my guidance the thirst for power. Now they are vanishing and I drift. I come, Mother, I come. . . .

It is said that Vivekananda's departure from this life, on July 4, 1902, had the appearance of being a premeditated act.

For several months previously, he had been releasing himself from his various duties, and training successors. But his health was better that day and he ate his noon meal with relish. He also talked philosophy with some of his brother monks, gave a Sanskrit lesson for three hours to a class of novices and went for a two-mile walk with Premananda during the afternoon. In the evening he went into his room and spent an hour in meditation. Then he called the disciple who was his personal attendant and asked him to open all the windows and to fan his head. Vivekananda lay down on his bed; the disciple thought he must be asleep or in deep meditation. Shortly after nine, his hands trembled a little and he breathed once, very deeply. A minute passed. Again he breathed deeply, in the same manner. Then his eyes and face became fixed in an expression of ecstasy. A little blood appeared around his mouth, in his nostrils and in his eyes.

When the doctors arrived, they thought at first that animation was only suspended. They tried artificial respiration for at least two hours. At midnight they had to admit that there was no more hope. They gave the cause of death as apoplexy or heart failure. But the brothers of the Order were convinced that he whom they had called Naren and Vivekananda had at last, as Ramakrishna had predicted, become aware of his true identity.

IF a successor to Vivekananda had had to be elected, none of the brothers would have hesitated; he could have been no other than their Raja, Ramakrishna's spiritual son. But no such choice was necessary. Among Vivekananda's many acts which later seemed to have been a preparation for his departure was his resignation from the presidency of the Mission, more than a year before he died. Brahmananda had succeeded him in

February 1901, and was to remain in office as president of both Math and Mission for the next twenty-one years.

I have spoken already of the transformation of Sarada Devi from the shy young wife of Ramakrishna into the Holy Mother of the Order. An equally great transformation may be said to have taken place in Rakhal, the gentle and yielding boy who became the almost superhumanly wise and powerful Brahmananda. Under his direction the Ramakrishna Math and Mission were shaped and Vivekananda's plans translated into action.

Brahmananda was a great administrator of the Mission's activities, but he constantly reminded his disciples and fellow workers that spirituality comes first, social service second. "The only purpose of life is to know God," he would tell them. "Attain knowledge and devotion; then serve God in mankind. Work is not the end of life. Disinterested work is a means of attaining devotion. Keep at least three fourths of your mind in God. It is enough if you give one fourth to service."

He was very particular about the source of any money that was offered to the Mission, and about the motives with which it was offered. A millionaire once came to them saying that he was ready to renounce the world; they could have his entire fortune. But Brahmananda refused. He was aware that the man, although quite sincere, was only acting on the impulse of the moment. He would have regretted his offer later.

Brahmananda was far more concerned for the spiritual growth of his disciples than for their practical efficiency. He once reprimanded a senior monk who had been put in charge of a novice: "did I send this young boy to you to make into a good clerk?" The success of a religious order, he said, must be judged by the inner life of each of its members, not by its achievements in social service.

As head of the Order he was of course empowered to

make the final decision whether or not to expel a monk who had been guilty of serious misbehavior. But he never made such decisions. Often he did not deal directly with the offense itself; instead, he would send for the culprit and have him meditate daily in his presence and render him personal service. On such occasions, the effect of his immense spiritual power and love would be witnessed by all. The culprit would become transformed. Brahmananda's care for others extended far beyond the ordinary human limits of compassion; indeed it was supernatural, for, as he occasionally admitted, he was at all times in mental communication with everybody in the Order and aware of all their problems. He knew that he could give spiritual help whenever it was needed, even at a long distance; and this knowledge made him magnificently unanxious and serene.

However, it should not be supposed that he was overlenient with his disciples. He would even subject a monk to public humiliation and dismissal from his presence; especially if he regarded that monk as having exceptional qualities and if he wished to train him for some difficult duty. Often, the apparent offense was something quite trivial. For example, a young monk who was performing the ritual worship had used three matches instead of one to light the lamps before the shrine; Brahmananda scolded him severely for lack of concentration. This caused some of the disciples to suspect that Brahmananda's rebukes were not what they seemed to be, but perhaps a method of destroying the disciple's bad karma. As one of them has written, "the chastening of a disciple never began until after he had enjoyed several years of love and kind words. These experiences were painful at the time but they were later treasured among the disciple's sweetest memories. It often happened that even while the disciple was being rebuked by Maharaj he would feel a strange undercurrent of

joy. The indifference of Maharaj was the only thing we could not have borne, but Maharaj was never indifferent. The very fact that he could speak to us in this way proved that we were his children, his own."

It has been said that Brahmananda was so entirely fearless that others could not feel fear in his presence. Once, when he was walking with two devotees in the woods of Bhubaneswar, a leopard appeared and came straight toward them. He stood still and confronted it calmly until it turned tail. Again, while he was going along a narrow lane in Madras, attended by two young monks, a mad bull came charging to meet them. The young men tried to protect their guru, who was already an elderly man, by standing in front of him; but he pushed them behind him with extraordinary strength and fixed his eyes upon the bull. It stopped, shook its head from side to side, and then trotted quietly away.

Brahmananda was tall and well-built, with eyes that were sometimes deeply searching and sometimes apparently unseeing, as though they were regarding an altogether different reality. His hands and feet were beautifully formed. His back strikingly resembled Ramakrishna's—to such a degree that Turiyananda once caught sight of Brahmananda walking ahead of him in the gardens of Belur and believed for a moment that he must be having a vision of the Master himself. Once, in a crowded railway station, one of his disciples overheard the conversation of two men who had been watching Brahmananda with great interest. One of them remarked that it was impossible to guess his nationality; he didn't seem to belong to any of the Indian races. The other man agreed, adding, "but you can see very well that he's a man of God."

Brahmananda did not have the eloquence of a Vivekananda. He inspired people by his silences quite as much as by his words. It is said that he could change the psychological at-

mosphere in a room, making the occupants feel talkative and gay and then inclining them to silent meditation, without himself saying anything. For the most part, his teachings were very simply expressed. "Religion is a most practical thing. It doesn't matter whether one believes or not. It is like science. If one performs spiritual disciplines, the result is bound to come. Although one may be practicing mechanically —if one persists one will get everything in time. . . . And if you go one step toward God, God will come a hundred steps toward you. . . . Why did God create us? So that we may love him." When one of his disciples asked permission to practice some severe spiritual austerities, Brahmananda asked, "why need you do that? We have done it all for you." He treated Ramlal, Ramakrishna's nephew, with the greatest respect and made the young disciples bow down before him, because he had the blood of the family into which the Master had been born. But Ramlal would protest that he himself had never truly recognized his uncle's greatness until his eyes had been opened to it by Brahmananda. Once, when a famous musician was performing, a devotee complained that he had played no devotional songs. Brahmananda, who loved music, replied, "don't you realize that sound itself is Brahman?"

"It's good to laugh every day," he used to say, "it relaxes the body and the mind." There are many stories of his fondness for practical jokes. On one occasion, Akhandananda, who had been staying with Brahmananda, said that he must leave next morning and return to his own mission center at Sargachi. Brahmananda pleaded with him to stay a little longer, but the Swami insisted; so a palanquin was hired to take him to the railway station, several miles away. As the train left very early, it was necessary to start in the small hours of the night. Akhandananda did not notice that Brahmananda had

whispered some instructions to the palanquin bearers. Having said good-bye to Maharaj, he settled down to doze in the darkness, with the curtains of the palanquin drawn. The journey seemed very long and the stops were frequent. The Swami called anxiously to the bearers from behind the curtains; he was afraid that he would miss the train. They reassured him, saying that there was plenty of time. At last they put down the palanquin and asked him to alight. When he parted the curtains to do so, there stood Brahmananda, as if ready to welcome him back after months of absence. Then Akhandananda realized that he had simply been carried round and round the compound in the dark. Brahmananda embraced him and the two of them laughed like children.

ALTHOUGH the Holy Mother was not a member of the Order she was, in a sense, its real head. Any wish or opinion expressed by her was regarded by Brahmananda and his brothers as a command to be obeyed without question. To them, the Mother was one with the Mother of the Universe and thus as holy as Ramakrishna himself. There were times when the Mother would indirectly acknowledge the existence of this Presence within her. In her family there was a female relative who was insane. Once this unfortunate woman began to curse the Holy Mother, crying, "let her die!" The Mother commented quietly, "she does not know that I am deathless."

Toward the end of her life, she fell sick of a recurring fever; her flesh wasted away and she became very weak. It was decided to move her from Jayrambati to the house which had been built for her in Calcutta. She was now too weak to leave her bed, and those around her noticed that she showed a growing detachment from everything earthly. She, who had cared for them all as her own children—who had recently

stopped an attendant who was fanning her, saying, "I can't sleep, thinking how your hand will ache"—now received the news of her beloved brother's death without shedding a tear. "Whatever work the Master wanted done by this body seems to be over," she said, "now my mind longs for him and wants nothing else." She began dismissing her closest relatives, sending them away to Jayrambati and elsewhere, as if to spare them the pain of her departure. One of the devotees cried, "Mother, what will become of us?" She answered, "why are you afraid? You have seen the Master." Not long after midnight, on July 21, 1920, she passed into her mahasamadhi.

BRAHMANANDA spent the last years of his life in a state of high spiritual consciousness, coming down from it only in order to help and teach others. He began to have the vision of Ramakrishna almost every day; not only seeing him but also talking with him. And yet, in conversation with strangers who came to visit the Mission, he would discuss a variety of worldly topics with intelligence and apparent interest; only his intimate disciples were aware that he remained completely detached.

In 1922, shortly after the celebrations of Ramakrishna's birthday, Brahmananda had a slight attack of cholera. This was followed by a serious diabetic condition. He suffered greatly for several days, but his mood was ecstatic; for he had visions of Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and other brothers who were no longer alive in the body. He heard Krishna calling him and he exclaimed, "put anklets on my feet—I want to dance with Krishna!"

There was no coma at the end as is usual in cases of diabetes. He had clear consciousness of his surroundings. His eyes were brilliant. He was perfectly calm. His last words to his disciples were, "do not grieve, I shall be with you always." On April 10, 1922, he left the body in samadhi.

Ramakrishnananda said of Brahmananda, while he was still alive, "Maharaj's mind has become one with the mind of Ramakrishna." Shivananda, speaking to a disciple of Brahmananda who was leaving to take up his duties as resident swami at one of the centers in the United States, expressed himself even more strongly: "Never forget that you have seen the Son of God. You have seen God." That same disciple, writing many years later, says, "he was our father, mother, and everything. After his passing away I felt no void. As long as Maharaj was in the physical body there was a barrier. Afterwards, the barrier was gone. I know that Maharaj is still living—and helping all of us."

"A band of minstrels suddenly appears, dances and sings. Then, just as suddenly, it departs." At this point, our story reaches its natural end.

The story that continues is that of a growing organization, and of the men and women who have helped to make Ramakrishna and his message more and more widely known throughout the world. But this book is about Ramakrishna the phenomenon; and a phenomenon has no concern with its aftereffects. If God does actually visit the earth from time to time in human form, is he any the more or the less God because of the number of his disciples or the size of the Church they later build for him?

The biographer of an ordinary "great man" is expected to conclude his work by assessing his hero's achievements, comparing him with other important figures of his period who were active in the same field, and assigning him a "place in history." I hope it will be obvious that any such attempt here would be meaningless.

To the best of my ability, the phenomenon has been de-

scribed. How should one interpret it? How react to it? Should it be dismissed from the mind, as something irrelevant and inconveniently out of line with everyday experience? Or should it be taken as the starting-point of a change in one's own ideas and life?

These questions I must leave to each individual reader—just as Saradananda and M. and the other writers about Ramakrishna leave them to me.

WHAT VEDANTA MEANS TO ME

E. RAPHAEL MAROZZI

INDIA is the "Blessed Punya Bhumi (Holy Land)" as said by Swami Vivekananda and has "deluged the earth again and again with the pure and perennial waters of spiritual truth." The very fiber of the nation is spiritual life and its genius lies in the realization of spiritual values. Its meaning and function to the world-at-large is to manifest, preserve, and to give forth the great spiritual truths it has been heir to from time immemorial. Addressing the nation on this point the great Swami said, "That intense faith in another world . . . that intense faith in God, that intense faith in the immortal soul is in you." All the philosophical systems of India (except Charvaka, materialism) state that the ultimate goal of man is moksha—spiritual perfection or freedom.

That this is so is now known and fully accepted by us and the meaning of this is to some extent realized. But some twenty years of our life in one of the most literate and progressive of countries kept obscured this most needful and vital knowledge. It was the era in our life in which scientific thinking opened to question time-honored ideals and values and affected young students' minds which became skeptical about the existence of God, soul, hereafter, and generally the teachings of church and philosophy. Men of science became the heroes of the day, their statements the scriptures, and Humian skepticism was the intellectual fashion of the times. This much can be attributed

to the ills and growing pains of the age—but there was a worse element to confuse our thinking and to obscure our mind from the precious and profound truths of India. That was the narrowness and bigotry of the churches adhering to their own dogmas and denying all else, together with the prejudice and propaganda planted in America by the enemies of Indian ideology for their own selfish ends. This latter, by prolonged application of hundreds of years, had taken root in schools and churches to such an extent that the effect of this on our mind was such ignorance that one of the questions asked in our first interview with Swami Vividishananda of the Ramakrishna Mission was, "Does India have many books?"

This is not to say, however, that only these external conditions were responsible for our state of obscuration and ignorance for we know our own karma was there to place us in such an environment to prevent the light and knowledge of India from coming through. The result of the above-mentioned dogmatic bigotry of the churches and science-oriented skepticism on one hand, and the propaganda-caused obscuration of India's ideals on the other, was a belligerent atheism to the extent that anyone who raised the subject of religion in our presence was in danger of having his faith shaken as a result of the ensuing verbal battle. Of course, we hasten to admit that that position was a very unhappy one for us and therefore we kept up our search for what life must mean, if it had a meaning, just as we had in our childhood when we continually asked parents, teachers, preachers, priests, ministers, philosophers, etc., the *raison d'être,* but with no satisfactory answer. This search for the reality, the meaning, the purpose of life went on by the study of art, music, literature, philosophy, science, psychology, psychoanalysis, etc. for a number of years with inevitable frustrations punctuated with momentary discoveries of light which

promptly vanished into the gloom of delusion and confusion. Secular knowledge, rooted in the finite, cannot reveal the Infinite, the Real, the One, but only wants to negate It. Division being endless, the more one knows of relative things —the many—the more one specializes, the vaster becomes the field of knowledge and therefore, the less one knows. "That knowledge knowing which all things are known" (the theme of the Mundaka Upanishad) is not a knowledge of the many, the finite, but of the One, the Infinite.

So we had periods of bleakness, loneliness, and vacuity reaching the point of despair when sometimes we took refuge in the idea that self-destruction could end this terrible imbalance of unrelieved struggle and suffering at one end and, at the other end, nothingness—. The mind went along with Schopenhauer in his pessimistic moods—life must be some kind of mistake—and when it becomes unbearable death comes to relieve it. But then there is beauty "which is a joy . . . that takes away the pall from our dark spirit"—the ecstasy of aesthetic contemplation, the bliss of love, the happiness in helping others. How to understand the contradictions?

Oriental art—especially the paintings and sculpture—at the Art Institute of Chicago (the same building in which Swami Vivekananda delivered his lectures at the famous Parliament of Religions—a spatial coincidence we like to think was providentially related to our later development) led us to look into the philosophy of India and the various yogas as found in popular books in the public libraries. This was followed by attempts to practice meditation as well as hatha-yoga postures and pranayamas (breathing exercises). The difficulties encountered soon became insurmountable and, hastening to seek out a teacher, we found that Swami Vividishananda was lecturing in Seattle—a city near which

we had been transferred because of military induction.

It is said that a spiritual man is one who can transmit religion. We went to the Swami with an agnostic bias and soon found that we were easily accepting spiritual truths we had been prejudiced against for many years. Prejudiced because we rebelled against accepting blindly the authoritarian dogma of the churches, based on ancient writings considered sacred and absolute, especially that man is born in sin and irrevocably consigned to the flames eternally unless he can take refuge in the church and lead a life of moral and ethical perfection—in spite of his inherent sinful nature and the man with the pitchfork (the personification of evil) making sure that he does not make much headway. Those who try to play this nearly hopeless game must wait until some unknown, indefinite time after death to hear the verdict whether or not they have succeeded. Of all this there is no kind of proof or verification. (It was only after studying Vedanta that we understood the true meaning of Christ's teachings.) Vedanta stands for spiritual experience immediately apprehended and for individual verification of its teachings. Spiritual experience means Self-realization. Neither spiritual knowledge nor true happiness can be had by following the avenues of the senses outwardly; they are to be found within the center of consciousness and are identical with the divine Self. The faith that Vedanta asks is faith in one's divine nature (no sinner here), faith in the teacher and the teachings—a faith that is to be verified here and now by one's own experience. The Swami spoke as one with authority, not only from his own experience but from that of his teacher Swami Brahmananda, who was a perfected disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. Here was religion as a living reality and not theories and doctrines or simply a vocation. Sri Ramakrishna was one who in his lifetime experienced the

entire gamut of the spiritual experiences of mankind and concluded that all religions are different paths to the same goal and Truth is One. In keeping with our scientific outlook, we believed that Truth must be universal and cannot be circumscribed and limited by exclusiveness and sectarianism. So here was the answer—Truth is One and is to be apprehended immediately by experience and realization. "This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms are but secondary details."

WHAT Vedanta has meant to us we shall try to sum up in the frame of a famous Vedic chant, and firstly say about Turiya, the "Truth of truth." Man is miserable, being confined in the city of nine gates (body) and functioning in the states of waking, dream, and sleep. The "truth" is that he is a divine soul functioning in a body and mind, and because of that soul he has consciousness, he thinks, feels, wills, sees, hears, etc. in the realm of the three states which are characterized by limitations of time, space, cause, name, and form. The "Truth of truth" is that man is only apparently this; in reality he is a divine being unconditioned by time, space, cause, name or form and does not function in any state except Turiya (illumination or freedom) and is always the immutable divine Reality. It is knowing this and having this before us as a goal of life that opened up for us new vistas and made life's struggles meaningful and worthwhile. There is no happiness in things finite (the Chandogya Upanishad tells us)—the finite of the three states and embodied existence. The Infinite is all joy and it is our true Self. Though not realized yet, that joy in part has entered our life and actions and has transformed our philosophical outlook and behavior from darkness to light and we are being led from the unreal to the Real and from death to immortality, as per the well-known prayer from the Yajur Veda.

Whereas the Real was heretofore a subject for philosophical discussion only, for it was the unknown and unknowable of Spencer, beyond human experience and therefore best to ignore it and be agnostic; it was afterwards understood to be the essence of all being—human and other—impossible to deny, it being our very consciousness. Though unknowable as being beyond the limited (unpurified) human mind, it can be experienced as the highest state of Being. Indeed this is the goal of human existence and the meaning and value of life. It is not an abstract mental idea (as heretofore thought) but the most tangible entity in relation to which this three-dimensional world of space-time is an unreal appearance and is chimerical in nature. The age-old riddles of good and evil, creation and creator, man and God, puzzling over which led us to pessimism and atheism, were now happily solved by the Vedantic view of Reality. *Tat Tvam asi* (That Thou Art) is indeed a bold statement which none in the West dared to make and by it is explained what is Reality, man, and his relation to It, as well as being the metaphysical foundation of ethical and moral values and the laws of righteousness (dharma).

Life seems to end in death—a contradiction which "must give us pause." Our pause consisted in the study of psychic phenomena and after-death states, and by pondering the age-old problem especially when it came into bold relief by the death of a near and dear one. This may well be the oldest of philosophical questions. In the Katha Upanishad, Nachiketas asks it and the answer given reveals the immortal nature of the soul of man as a divine Reality (Brahman) "whose food are the brahmin and the kshatriya, and Death but condiment." Man—true man—is the ultimate Reality and all changes are but passing shadows. Thus we are led out of death to immortality.

Ignorance heretofore was thought of as lack of secular knowledge, or lack of education or cultural development. In Vedanta ignorance is the root cause of embodiment, of misery, of limitation, and of karma. When man—the divine Self —arrogates to himself anything that is non-Self, that is, anything belonging to the objective universe including body and mind, that is ignorance and it is this which imprisons man in the three states and obstructs him from the fourth state of spiritual Knowledge and Freedom. The effect of this kind of understanding upon us was somewhat like the man who, though possessed by a ghost, thinks he is all right and then is made to discover his sad plight. To be exorcised from this ghost is the ultimate victory and all weapons must be brought to bear on this point—moral and ethical practices; discrimination of the Real from the unreal, Self from non-Self; detachment and renunciation; control of mind, control of senses, self-withdrawal, etc.; all spiritual practices and disciplines known to man plus the grace of God are to be used against this arch-enemy. By this, then, we are being led from the darkness of ignorance to spiritual light.

Following a trip to India's holy places in 1950 we settled in Honolulu where, due to the East West inter-cultural interest of the people, a study group easily developed with the purpose of meeting in classes for the study of traditional Vedanta texts. Swamis of the Ramakrishna Mission have come to instruct and it is a beautiful experience to see a sincere devotee who has found a way to Truth. Then we think how the fruit of many lives must converge to bring this about. Thus we are seeing how Vedanta enriches, transforms and illumines the lives of others and we know that what Vedanta means to us—which is really beyond words to say—is not more significant than what it means in the lives of others.

SHANTI ASHRAMA

BLANCH PARTINGTON

In August 1900, Swami Turiyananda, a monastic disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, journeyed with a dozen men and women devotees from San Francisco to an isolated spot in the San Antonio Valley of California, where he established the first Vedanta retreat in America. It was located fifty miles from the nearest railway station and twelve miles from the nearest town. They called it Shanti Ashrama (Peace Retreat).

Swami Turiyananda had traveled far to found the Shanti Ashrama. He was born as Harinath Chatterjee in Calcutta in 1863. When he was in his teens he met Sri Ramakrishna, who saw the young brahmin as the perfect embodiment of the renunciation taught in the Bhagavad-Gita—and accepted him as a disciple. Shortly after Sri Ramakrishna's death in 1886, Hari joined his brother disciples in taking monastic vows, and after a brief stay at their monastery near Calcutta he spent several years making pilgrimages in northern India.

In 1899, when Swami Vivekananda planned to visit America for the second time in order to give an impetus to the work he had begun six years earlier as Hindu delegate of the World's Parliament of Religions at Chicago, he asked his brother monk Turiyananda to accompany him, saying that he wanted to show the West an example of an ideal Hindu sannyasin. At first Turiyananda refused, preferring to continue his austere life of spiritual practice and scriptural study in familiar sur-

roundings. Finally he agreed to accompany Vivekananda, and in August 1899 the two Swamis arrived in New York where Turiyananda held lectures and classes on Vedanta for nearly a year. In the meantime, an American devotee had offered Vivekananda one hundred and sixty acres in the San Antonio Valley of Santa Clara County, California, to be used as a retreat. Vivekananda accepted the property and asked Turiyananda to take charge of it. Turiyananda spent the greater part of the next two years at the Ashrama, instructing the devotees in spiritual matters and meditating and working with them, going only occasionally to San Francisco in order to give lectures. He was a scholarly and austere man. Yet Westerners and Easterners alike found him easily approachable. He had a compassionate heart and great breadth of vision, and his manifest spirituality inspired many to devote themselves to the realization of God.

In 1902, the Swami's health began to break down, and he returned to India where he practiced spiritual disciplines in solitude for about eight years. Thereafter he lived in one or another of the monasteries of the Ramakrishna Order, instructing the young monastics, until his death in 1922.

Two weeks after Swami Turiyananda had started the Shanti Ashrama, Blanch Partington, a reporter from the San Francisco Chronicle, *arrived to write an article about the retreat for her paper. It was published August 26, 1900, and is reproduced below, with the original spelling. Although Miss Partington's story reflects the fact that she was a casual observer of a religious experiment and not a spiritual aspirant, it has the special merit of eyewitness reporting. Her impressions of the daily routine at the Ashrama and her accounts of conversations with Swami Turiyananda and the devotees contribute a valuable record to the history of the Vedanta movement in America.*

"They are Theosophists."

"They are Altrurians."

"They are Shakers."

"They are Bellamy students, who are going to build a new Utopia."

"They are celibates, vegetarians, faith cure cranks."

"They are—"

These are some of the things that are said by the mystified people of the San Antone valley concerning a small body of men and women who are seeking righteousness by the route of Hindoo philosophy.

Strange rumors of the coming of a peculiar people to their peaceful lowlands began to be rife among the denizens of San Antone valley more than a month ago. From San Jose, where the mysterious party left the beaten track of civilization, to the heights of Mount Hamilton, down its steep dips and curves on the other side; through the smiling Ysabel valley, across the dry winding bed of the Coyote river; about the great "beef fields" of the stock ranches, to the San Antone valley itself, where they have made their home, the fame of this strange people is blown abroad, and wild and weird are the accounts of them.

"You do not know them?" I was invariably asked, as in my little pilgrimage to the "Shanti Ashrama," which means Peaceful Retreat, I sought the countryside point of view of the work and ideals of the Philosophic invaders of the quiet valley.

"I have come all the way from San Francisco to find out about them," was my reasonably disingenous answer, for your country folk are gentle people and would not criticize your friends even upon invitation, and I must admit more knowledge of the subject than my queries gave me credit for. But points of view are so fascinating, and the large latitude for the imagination in the mysterious doings of this new cult so

tempting that I fell by the wayside into the sin of the listener. As we neared the valley in the wilderness the reports grew more intimate and picturesque. As we went down the farther slopes of Mount Hamilton, with ineffably beautiful vistas of brown and golden hills, opening at either side, the driver of the neat little rig which carried me to my destination told me what "they said."

Darker and more wonderful grew the tales as the twilight deepened into night, and the distant glimmer of a campfire told of the whereabouts of the mysterious company. Tales of mesmeric marvels, of how the dusky Hindoo monk, the Swami Turyananda, leader of the little band of truthseekers, had hypnotized his American disciples; how they sat in mystic circles around the campfire at night, chanting mysterious harmonies; how strange things might be seen rising from the flames and gliding in and about the hoary old oaks surrounding the magic fire, were one willing to adventure within range of the influence—all this he told me.

"Not that I believe the stories," the sturdy mountaineer said, with a hunter's disregard for aught but the sportsman's superstitions, but we were both curiously silent as we drove into the "Shanti Ashrama," and came upon the very scene described by the imaginative villagers.

In a stillness almost absolute, broken only by the light hiss of the living flame leaping upward to the velvety blue-black sky and the faint murmur of far pines, the worshipers of the divine, as known to the Hindoos, sat in charmed circle. At one side, immobile as a bronze Buddha, and in the immemorial position assumed by that ancient teacher of men, sat the Swami Turyananda, and about him his disciples, all with closed eyes, and a look of rapt contemplation upon their quiet faces. Now and again the deep musical chant of a Sanscrit hymn, intoned in a rich, low voice, broke the silence; then

again only the song of the pines was heard, and the worshipers sat in as utter an unconsciousness of the stranger in their midst and the mundane world as if they had been in the innermost recesses of the Himalayan mountains whence comes their teacher.

At last one of the silent figures rose, bade me welcome warmly and sped the kindly driver and the huntsman who had guided us the last few miles; then took me to the camp kitchen and prepared a needed meal, entertaining me until the sacred ceremonial around the fire was at an end. Then we joined the worshipers.

Once within the cheerful circle of the blaze, and in range of its grateful warmth, the camp seemed much as other camps but for the picturesque and unusual figure of the leader, Swami Turyananda, garbed in a robe of elusive gray, dark as is the wont of the children of the sun, with bright, black eyes, a brow covered with fine lines of thought, a mild and gracious mien, yet withal an indefinable air of an absolute aristocracy. He was a singular figure at a good American campfire. The others, the chelas or disciples, curiously enough twelve in number, are simply good United States citizens, with the usual brown face and country rig of the average camper, short skirts and sunbonnets included, for they are mostly women. But it is a strange camp nevertheless.

IMAGINE in a country swarming with deer, jack rabbits, dove, quail and all kinds of game a camp without a gun. Imagine Sanscrit chants 'round the camp fire at night instead of the classic "Clementine" and the "Spanish Cavalier!" Imagine discussions on the cosmic evolution and its purpose in the place of hunters' tales of derring-do in the woods! Imagine, in short, every ideal of the ordinary camp displaced and a resolute hunt

after the inner "potential divinity" of man substituted and you have the "Shanti Ashrama."

"I have come to write about you, Swami," I confessed at length when the meditative atmosphere had been somewhat dispelled and I found courage to bring the outer world into the philosophers' retreat.

"Many miles we have come to get away from civilization, and lo! it is at our heels again," smiled the Swami, and seeing my camera—which suddenly seemed to take on a profane air—he chanted, "Shiva, Shiva, Shiva!" which I find, is the utmost expression of amused annoyance permitted to rise to the gentle lips of these Hindoo thinkers.

"But you will permit? And will you not tell me in many words what you wish to do here, the ideal and purp for which the Shanti Ashrama has been founded?"

"Surely," he said, "but we shall find it all at the begin ning of the 'Raja Yoga,' which Swami Vivekananda wrote and translated. Let us read; it is here:

" 'Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal.

" 'Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy, by one or more or all of these—and be free.

" 'This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are all but secondary details.' "

"You use certain physical means to your end, as, for instance, the control of the breath, refraining from certain foods, and so on. What is the philosophy of that?" I asked.

"Simply that it is always easier to control that which is gross than that which is fine. First, control the body by means of controlling the breath, the principal gross motion of the body, the finer perceptions will inevitably follow. The power of concentration, by which all knowledge is attained, is most

readily reached in this manner, the reflective power of the mind most readily aroused. Concentration on external things is less difficult. It is the study of the mind, by the mind itself, through which the soul is known that we are attempting here, and through perfectly simple and practical methods, which you will find well explained in the Raja Yoga."

"Are you all going to be Swamis—Yogis?" I asked of the interested circle, who were regarding the wise, child-like face of their teacher with evident love and admiration.

"In some distant future," smiled one of them. "But the retreat is founded, and we hope it will be the center of attraction for this kind of thought all through America. It is the only Shanti Ashrama outside of India, and California, with its possibilities of outdoor life, is certainly the happiest situation possible for one."

And then they told me that the land had been the gift of one of them, Miss Boock—160 acres of it, a veritable wilderness, 40 miles from any railroad and comfortably distant from the distractions of civilization.

"Shiva, Shiva, Shiva!" said the Swami again, once more regarding the incongruous camera. "You told me, Chetana," he said, smiling at one of the members, "that we must have the retreat a little Americanized, and it is here. Shiva, Shiva, Shiva!"

And Chetana merely replied that nothing these days was sacred from the photographic eye and then explained to me the curious situation in the valley, once thickly settled. Swiss-Italians and Germans and others came to farm the fertile plains, and for a time the place was musical with the hum of many voices. But water was difficult to obtain and transportation prohibitive and the little colony left the beautiful valley in despair. Now there are houses without inhabitants, a schoolhouse without scholars, wells without water, and barns with-

out grain. Great stock ranches have grown up in their stead, one near by 44,500 acres in extent, and to these things are due the desirable solitude which surrounds the Ashrama.

"Swami, always at our campfires we told ghost stories. Won't you please tell us an Indian spirit tale—have you ever seen a ghost yourself?" American audacity inquired of the sage.

And the weirdness of things came back, as the Swami said, with uttermost simplicity, "Yes, I think so, but it may have been hallucination. It was once in our monastery in India. I was walking down the hall with a friend and we met a stranger coming toward us, who turned off into an unused room. I followed him to tell him that there was nothing and no one there, but he had completely disappeared when I entered the room. My friend did not see him at all, and afterward I heard that a man of his description had killed himself in the house. Of course, as I said, it may have been hallucination, and it may not; there are such things."

"It is nothing but the play of children, and ghosts are the spirits of those who have not sense to know they are dead," said the Swami, and, with a blessing toward east and west and north and south he betook himself to his tent for the night. Thirteen tents there are and a log cabin, and, with kindly courtesy, this nearest approach to a house was assigned to me.

STRANGE DREAMS were mine that night, of mahatmas, and sacred fires and wandering spirits, and in the morning, when the sun shone brightly through every clink in the little cabin, I wakened with the sound of a church organ in my ears, hardly knowing if I were not still sleeping. It was the Swami, chanting an early morning hymn to the sun and arousing the sleepers to Hindoo matins. Most of the disciples were gathered about the ashes of last evening's fire when I came out into

the wonderful dawn of the mountain morning. I joined them, and as I sat with the rest the Swami added one more to the little incense sticks set in the sand in front of each worshiper, and thirteen slender threads of perfumed, silvery smoke lost themselves in the blue of the early morning air. This, by the way, is the only approach to any ecclesiastical ritual or ceremony that I saw used among this people.

I closed my eyes with the rest, for the morning was one to be worshiped. For a time I was conscious of nothing but the liquid trill of a lark, the distant tinkle of cow bells, the busy tap of a woodpecker, the sharp bark of a coyote, the gentle soughing of the cool wind, the delicate, poignant aroma of the smoking incense and the melodious intoning of the Sanscrit scriptures. But, in a while, with the unusual physical quietude, perhaps the regular conscious breathing, the varied poetry of the scene and something else—atmosphere or what you will—I became conscious of an unusual harmony within myself, as if I were an instrument in absolute tune with some eternal harmony, a sense of unusual well-being and tranquility, which I have no words to express intelligibly. For how is the average American to understand the effect of an hour's conscious quiescence with the mind turned in upon itself in a rare introspection, and all amid such surroundings? It is open to experiment, however, and perhaps worth while.

After about an hour's silence, first one disciple, then another, left the circle and went about the daily round of common tasks. Until a few days ago all the water had to be fetched four miles in barrels, but a good spring has lately been discovered within a quarter of a mile from camp.

Some went to the well for water, and I was wondering if the teacher, by some divine right, were considered exempt from the common task. But with the rest he took the buckets and shared in all the labors of the camp. The women were

busied about the breakfast and soon set before the company, under the waving awning of the al-fresco dining-room, a smoking bowl of mush, good bread and butter and stewed fruits. Needless to say that the camp is vegetarian. The meal passed in pleasant talk of friends: of Swami Vivekananda, founder of the movement in California, and now in Paris, with little intermissions into the realms of philosophy.

"A man may become so pure that his purity is tangible, as it were. The body may become pure in an intensely physical sense, and it must emanate that purity wherever it goes."

"If you practise Yoga your perceptions will become so fine that you will see these Tanmatras—the physical and mental atmosphere given off by every one as a flower throws out its scent.

"We are free and not free. Soul is free and body and mind are bound, whence comes the contradictory consciousness of coincident freedom and bondage. We must believe we are free; yet every moment finds we are not free. If you say that the idea of freedom is a delusion, I will also say that the idea of bondage is a delusion, because both stand upon the same basis—consciousness. So says the Raja Yoga," and the Swami, at the head of the table in a seat of honor made of manzanita boughs, calmly quoted saying after saying from his scriptures.

"What wonderful memories you people have, Swami," said some one.

"Not so much now," he said, "but in time past and with some even now, a book is read, and, with one reading, remains in the memory."

"May I photograph you here?" I asked, after the pleasant meal had ended, and with permission of the company I "took" the arbor under the oak trees, with hills on every side of it, where the Brahmin and his disciples eat their simple fare. Not

all eat together. Some few women have their little menage to themselves, and these are mostly women who have left all to follow the philosopher.

With evident relief the Swami rose after the operation, and, with his customary ejaculation, went after wood for the stove. After the dishes had been washed and tents had been set in order, the indefatigable philosophers again set about their eternal task.

This time the "service" began with reading from the "Raja Yoga," and a book of Sanscrit quotations from the Vedas, the Hindoo Scriptures, read first in the indescribably musical original and then translated. Then came the discussion of the subjects and the Swami, with his bronze brow drawn into fine lines and with expressive gestures and simple words, explained away the subtle difficulties in the path of the disciples. The theory of creation, morality versus spirituality, the place and limits of nature, evolution, were among the small problems that went round. John Fiske was quoted, and Huxley, who said that "the cosmic process has no relation to moral ends." Fiske's rejoinder, "I feel like replying with the question, 'Does not the cosmic process exist purely for the sake of moral ends?' " was remembered, and then the Swami called the meeting to order with a command to remember again the Atman (soul) and meditation began.

This time I had to think of returning, for my time among the seekers after the truth was almost gone, and I looked at them as one from the outside world must look. The gentle face of the teacher, calm, dark and strong against the blue sky; the face of women, old and young, at first restless, then calm as that of the Master himself; the faces of men, with the same rapt expression and utter obliviousness of surroundings, their eyes closed, or opened, unseeing. There they stayed another hour. Four hours a day they think and pray.

I watched and wondered a while.

"Aum, Aum, Aum," the strange chant rose and fell in its half-barbaric but wholly musical intervals, reminding one of the Egyptian hymn to Phtha, in "Aida."

"Aum, Aum, Aum," there is some magic in the word, for I must needs join in or leave the circle. But time waits for no man, or woman either, and I noiselessly go back to my log cabin.

"Aum, Aum, Aum," there in this Californian valley the hymns of the oldest religion known to man are being chanted—a religion so old that all traditions of its origin are lost in the mists of antiquity.

"Aum, Aum, Aum," what of the country where the chant is daily sung, with its millions dying of starvation and its multitudes living in direst poverty? Is there a connecting link between this religion, which teaches an absolute renunciation of all sense enjoyments, and the condition of the Hindoo masses? And is the mountain dreamer perhaps right that the millenium is coming, the child of the union of Eastern idealism and Western thought? Who knows? I take my leave of these kindly people with the weird chant still ringing in my ears, "Aum, Aum, Aum."

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD's forthcoming biography of Sri Ramakrishna, which has been serialized in *Vedanta and the West,* is entitled *Ramakrishna and His Disciples.* It will be published in book form by Simon and Schuster, Inc. in New York, by Methuen & Co. Ltd. in London, and by Advaita Ashrama in Calcutta. Previously unpublished photographs have been selected by the author for inclusion in the book.

E. RAPHAEL MAROZZI is a student of Indian philosophy and Sanskrit. In 1951 he organized a Vedanta study group in Honolulu which a guest swami (usually Swami Vividishananda of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Center, Seattle) conducts each year during the summer months.

BLANCH PARTINGTON's article on the "Shanti Ashrama," which begins on page 51 of the present issue, is reprinted in *Vedanta and the West,* courtesy of the San Francisco *Chronicle.* Those who would like to learn more about the life and teachings of SWAMI TURIYANANDA, who established the Ashrama, may be interested to know that an English biography of the Swami was published in 1963. Entitled *Swami Turiyananda,* it was written by Swami Ritajananda who heads the Vedanta center in France.

up the worse for wear. In due course, as my ego diminishes, I will come to see how poor my management is. It will become a habit with me to leave things to God.

But certain conditions prevail. First, there is the time element. His timing is often very different from what mine might be. He seems to work with more deliberation. I must recognize this and await events with patience.

Secondly, just because you aren't responsible doesn't mean you can be lazy. Indeed, you must be alert to his promptings, because sometimes it is you he uses as his appointed agent in coping with your affairs.

And third, if we leave things to the Lord we must accept the solutions he works out. He will not excuse us from all exertion, but he will, I am convinced, save us from serious strain. I once had a demonstration of this principle—or so I fancy. I had a long distance to go and no transportation. It was at night and I was tired. My course lay up two long hills and over two level stretches. I decided to leave in the hands of God the matter of whether I should get a lift to my destination or be forced to walk. What happened was that at the bottom of each of the two hills a motorist came along and offered me a ride. But the driver in each case was going only as far as the top. So I got rides up the steep places but had to walk on the flat parts!

It is hard to describe exactly how it operates—this policy of resigning one's fate to the Divine. It is a matter of living intuitively, in a state of "alert surrender." But the principle does work, for at moments now and then I have managed to abide by it. As I reflect upon these occasions I can see how well matters have gone when managed by him instead of me.

I have become a devotee of God. Why then should I not take advantage of what he is eager to do for me—to become my protector and the able director of the least of my affairs?

Vedanta and the West

Vedanta teaches that man's real nature is divine; that it is the aim of man's life to unfold and manifest this divinity; and that truth is universal. Vedanta accepts all the religions of the world and reveres the great prophets, teachers, and sons of God, because it recognizes the same divine inspiration in all.

STUDENT'S NOTEBOOK No. 28

One day Shiva, looking down from heaven, noticed that a devotee of his was about to be set upon by a highwayman. So Shiva started forth to take up the man's defense. However, by this time the devotee had found a stick beside the road and was busily trading blows with the bandit. Eventually, although battered, the devotee was able to drive the robber away. In the meantime Shiva had relaxed, remarking, "Why should I interpose my aid when he prefers to help himself?"

This story illustrates a truth whose subtle implications I am learning to appreciate. If you think yourself capable of managing everything for yourself, the Lord will let you do it. (God is too well mannered ever to impose himself upon anyone.) Generally, however, since my knowledge is limited, my solutions will not be very good. I may, like the man in the story, get by; but I will have to fight my way through life and am bound to end

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THE NEED FOR CLOSER CO-OPERATION AMONG WORLD RELIGIONS

ARNOLD J. TOYNBEE

WHEN I was asked to speak on this subject in this church this evening, I was very glad. I believe that closer co-operation among the religions is one of our greatest needs today. If the followers of the different religions of the world could rise to the spiritual level which co-operation between them requires and presupposes, this would, I believe, be a first step towards grappling on the spiritual plane with mankind's present-day tremendous common problems; and it is only on the spiritual plane that we can hope to solve them. Would-be economic or political solutions are only superficial solutions unless and until they are taken up to the spiritual level.

It is a particularly good thing to discuss this subject in a Christian Church.

Co-operation has till recently, been an unfamiliar idea among the followers of the three Judaic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. More than that, it has seemed to them an improper idea, indeed a shocking one. Co-operation has seemed a shocking suggestion because each of these three religions has traditionally involved the holding of an identical belief—the belief that *my* religion is not only true and right, so that every other religion must, in some degree, be false and

wrong. This would imply that it would be wrong to co-operate with any other religion's followers.

It was natural that the first Israelite monotheists should take this intransigent view that their own religion was uniquely true and right. They were unique among their contemporaries, so far as they knew, in being monotheists. The gods worshiped by their neighbors were, in their belief, not gods at all: they were imaginary gods who were, in truth, nonexistent. If Yahweh was the One True God the gulf between the worship of Yahweh and other religions was absolute.

In course of time, Judaism gave birth to two daughter monotheistic religions, Christianity and Islam, which made converts to monotheism on a scale that Judaism itself had never attempted. Between them, Islam and Christianity converted nearly half the human race to monotheism. Yet the followers of each of these three monotheistic religions have had much the same attitude to the other two as the followers of all three of them have had to non-monotheistic religions. They have regarded each other, too, as unbelievers who are outside the pale of true and right religion.

Islam, being the youngest of the three, has been more tolerant of Judaism and Christianity than either of these two has been of Islam or of each other. In the Qur'an it is declared that Jews and Christians are, like Muslims, "People of the Book": that is, that they, too, have a book which, like the Qur'an, has been revealed by God. Islam believes that the Torah and the New Testament, too, are revelations, and that they are true and right as far as they go. The Qur'an does not abrogate them (just as, in the Christian view, the New Testament does not abrogate the Torah). The Qur'an supplements and completes the Torah and the New Testament.

The Qur'an requires Muslims to tolerate and protect Jews and Christians if these agree to submit, politically, to

Muslim rule. All the same, Muslims have, in practice, regarded Jews and Christians in much the same way as these have regarded Muslims and each other. In Muslim eyes, Jewish and Christian monotheists have not been true believers.

All the principal living religions of the human race come from one or other of two relatively small patches of the inhabited part of the earth's surface. The Judaic religions come from southwest Asia; Hinduism and Buddhism come from India.

When we turn from the Judaic family of religions to the Indian group, we find a different traditional attitude towards co-operation here. For the followers of the Indian religions, co-operation is not something strange and wrong; it is something that is taken for granted.

In Japan, for instance, Buddhism has reached a compromise with Shintoism. Shinto gods have offered themselves to bodhisattvas, and have been accepted by them, to serve as their janitors. Japanese are often married by a Shinto priest, but buried by a Buddhist.

To imagine a parallel to this Japanese compromise in our own Judaic world, one must try to imagine that, here in Los Angeles, besides the Christian churches and Jewish synagogues, there are temples of the gods of our pre-Christian ancestors: the Teutonic gods certainly, and perhaps the Roman and the Greek gods as well. One must imagine the Christian ministers and the Jewish rabbis and the pagan priests agreeing together amiably to allocate among themselves the different services that each of them shall perform for the whole community. Every member of the community will be a Christian and a Jew and a pagan. He will not be a follower of any single religion exclusively.

This is the traditional situation, as between different religions, in India and Eastern Asia.

This friendly coexistence and co-operation between different religions in the Indian half of the civilized world has, I believe, a lesson for those of us who, by the accident of birth, happen to have been born and raised in the Judaic half of the world.

In our time, all sections of mankind have suddenly been brought into close physical contact with each other—and this at a moment when we have invented an annihilating weapon. We have to learn to live together—and this not only without fighting each other and without disapproving of each other. We have to learn to feel a positive respect and love for each other and for each other's religions.

Today we have to learn to do this for the sake of self-preservation; but it has always been right to do it, even in the time when self-preservation was not at stake—I mean, the time before 1945.

There seem to be signs of a change from mutual intolerance towards mutual toleration and esteem among the followers of the three Judaic religions, in spite of the intransigence that has been the traditional attitude of each of them.

1. Muslims and Christians, and, inside Western Christendom, Protestants and Roman Catholics have long since given up going to war with each other in the hope of either forcibly converting or exterminating the followers of the other religion.

2. Among Protestant Western Christians there is now an Ecumenical Movement for reuniting the splinter churches into which Protestant Christianity has broken up. Some Eastern Orthodox churches have joined this movement.

3. The Roman Catholic Church under the leadership of the present Pope seems to be less intransigent than ever before towards other Christian churches. This more charitable attitude has shown itself in the recent Vatican Council, of which there is to be a further session.

4. Muslims and Christians are beginning to recognize what they have in common as well as their differences.

If it is true that there is, today, an abatement of the traditional hostility between the different monotheistic religions of the Judaic family, we have still to ask ourselves some questions about this.

1. Is the motive expediency, rather than a belief that mutual esteem and co-operation are right in themselves?

2. Whatever the motive for the decrease in mutual intolerance may be, are mutual esteem and co-operation good in themselves?

Here we have come to the heart of the question that you have asked me to discuss with you today. This is, of course, not only the heart of it; it is also the most delicate point in it.

I shall therefore be rather hesitant and tentative in putting to you the reasons why I, personally, believe that close co-operation among the religions of the world is good—and would still be good, even if expediency did not call for it.

REASONS why mutual respect and co-operation are good absolutely:

1. The limitedness of human capacity for knowing what is true and right. The universe is only partially intelligible to human minds. It is partly mysterious: this is why human souls crave for divine revelation about the fundamental things in the universe, which seem to be beyond the comprehension of the unaided human mind.

Now, I may believe that, through the channel of my particular religion, I have received genuine revelation. I may believe in the *absolute* genuineness and authoritativeness of the revelation that has been given to me. But I know, as a fact of observation, that my fellow monotheists, the Jews and the

Muslims, have exactly the same belief about the different revelations that, in their belief, have been given to them. If we believe in the absolute truth and rightness of our own revelation as against the other two, only one of the three monotheistic religions can be absolutely right, and the other two—whichever these may be—must be at least partially wrong. But what human being is in a position to judge between them? We all believe that we have received our different revelations from the same God whom we all worship. Only God himself can judge which religion, if any, is true and right.

We know that, being human, we are fallible. We have to

FROM THE LIVES OF THE HOLY

The love of the guru can transform a life by discerning merit beyond all external appearances.

For an example of such perspicacity and love we may turn to the story of a remarkable Bengali saint named Haridas. Though a devout Hindu, he had been born a Muslim; thus in Hindu society he was considered "outside caste," unacceptable. He became a follower of Sri Chaitanya, who welcomed him with affection and regard. Always at a respectful distance, Haridas followed Sri Chaitanya to various places of pilgrimage. Then a touching scene took place, at the time when Haridas arrived in Puri, where Chaitanya had settled. Though urged by the devotees to go and be received by Chaitanya, Haridas refused, saying that he was of no caste and therefore not allowed to enter the temple, and he would not even approach it, feeling himself unworthy. He remained

face the possibility that we may have been at least partially mistaken in our belief about the revelation that has come our way. At least, we may be mistaken in believing that our own revelation has absolute validity as against the revelation that the followers of other religions believe that they have.

2. The nature of God, as this is conceived of by Judaic monotheists, makes it seem incompatible with his nature that he should have given authentic revelation to some single fraction of mankind alone.

We believe that God is absolutely powerful, just, and loving, and that he is the creator and father of all his crea-

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A SERIES ON SAINTLINESS IN PRACTICE

by the roadside, chanting the Lord's name, happy to be just in the vicinity of his guru. Sri Chaitanya came out to meet Haridas, who upon sight of the master fell prostrate at his feet. Chaitanya embraced his disciple and both shed tears of joy. But Haridas persisted: "Do not touch me, Master. I am only a low wretch." Chaitanya answered, "When I touch you I am purified by your perfect devotion. All austerities, pilgrimages, giving of alms—are unequal to the piety you acquire each moment. You are holier than a brahmin or sannyasin."

Chaitanya gave Haridas a room in the garden of the temple and sent him the *prasad* (the sacramental food offering) from the daily worship. Because Chaitanya perceived the beauty of his soul, Haridas avoided scorn and, indeed, became a respected comrade of the devout men of his day.

tures. Christians have the further belief that God has given a practical demonstration of this love for all human beings by voluntarily submitting, for our sake, to the sufferings that are of the essence of being human.

If this picture of God's character is correct, then God, if he has revealed himself at all, must surely have revealed himself to all men and must have offered to all of us an opportunity for salvation. If so, all religions must contain divine revelation, at least in some degree.

This conclusion will be taken as a matter of course by the followers of the religions of the Indian family.

3. All religions, the Indian and the Judaic alike, have one identical purpose: they all aim at helping individual human beings to deal with human sin and suffering. The spiritual salvation of human souls is their common goal. They have different conceptions of salvation, and different prescriptions for attaining it, but salvation is the objective of all of them.

4. While human nature is fundamentally uniform, there seem to be different variations on our fundamentally identical spiritual make-up. It is conceivable that each of the different religions may contain a partial revelation that is particularly helpful for some particular variety of our common human nature.

IN OUR TIME, every human soul, whatever its particular psychological make-up may be, is up against the same formidable problem. The huge increase in the scale and complexity of social life has upset the balance between the individual soul and its social environment. The power of social forces, and the pressure of these on the individual, have become so great that, under this pressure of collective power, the individual

feels impotent and helpless. He is tempted to despair of being able to take an effective action, and he is therefore tempted to resign himself to being carried along passively by society, instead of obeying his conscience when it tells him—as it often does—to stand up against society and to oppose society at his peril.

If we give in to this temptation, we are abdicating from being moral creatures, with the duty of distinguishing between right and wrong and doing what, to the best of our belief, is right. To put our conscience to sleep is to dehumanize ourselves. But how can the individual find the strength to hold his own against present-day society? I believe that religion alone can help the human soul to hold its own. I also believe that all religions have help of this kind to give us. I therefore believe that the human race needs the co-operation of all the religions with each other. It needs this to help us to cope with the gigantic social forces that we have conjured into existence.

HOW TO GAIN POISE

SWAMI GNANESWARANANDA

ONCE, standing near Niagara Falls, and hearing the thunderous roar, I wondered what that tremendous commotion was all about. I thought: When did it begin, and when would it end; when would it come to a state of perfect poise? The only conclusion I could reach was that this commotion, this thunderous uproar, this tremendous agitation, would come to a state of perfect tranquillity, poise, and rest only when the upper and the lower levels would be one and the same. The upper basin is constantly pouring a tremendous quantity of water into the lower one. The lower basin is receiving it, but it cannot retain it; it is spending the supply all the time. Yet, from above, the gigantic supply is always rushing into it. If, somehow or other, the lower basin could contain the supply and rise to a higher level, and attain the level of the upper basin, there would be no more tumult, no more uproar, no agitation of any kind.

In much the same way, human life is receiving a supply from "above," but our containers do not know the art of conserving the supply and rising to a higher level. If, by conserving the supply, we could rise to a higher level and become one with the source of supply, that would mark the end of all the agitation, the tumult, and the commotion in

our inner beings. Man must be one with God if he wants to attain to a state of perfect poise. As long as he occupies a lower level, as long as he is spending all his energy in the outer world, in short, as long as he does not know what use to make of the constant supply which is rushing into him, he must suffer, there must be lack of tranquillity and poise.

So, my friends, if you want me to give you the answer to the question "How to Gain Poise," I will say, there is only one way to gain it—to bring the level of humanity to the same level with God. Let us realize God. Let us know that all of our senses, our mental faculties, nay, every atom of our being, is completely surcharged and saturated with God; I am God. God the eternal source of perfection, of infinite bliss, knowledge, and existence is my real Self. Let your goal be to attain God. If you forget that, if you reject God from the plan of your life you may occasionally get a little peace and poise when you unconsciously touch that divine Source, but you cannot attain complete and lasting tranquillity and poise unless you have been united with God, unless you have been completely filled with God.

The average man, I think you will agree, does not consider poise to be of much value; he does not aspire to attain it. Most people are rushing headlong towards the objects they want to gain, and in their eagerness to fill their senses with things, in enjoying the excitement of the moment, they do not feel the lack of poise. Only when they meet with some obstructions to their enjoyment do they feel the lack of it. Then they think that perhaps a little more poise might have assisted them in gaining their desired objects. You will find that when we are overpowered by disappointments, anxieties, worries, and fears, we feel the need of the healing balm of peace and poise. Thus under such circumstances, we conceive of these as a means for the attainment of material objects.

In that sense it is true that people want peace and poise, but for what purpose? Have they been convinced that to attain peace and poise is the goal? No. Ordinarily, people consider these qualities just as a means by which they can sharpen their faculties in order to attain something they desire. We get a little power and that, again, we exhaust by chasing shadows. However, a time comes, eventually, when we change our attitude. A time comes when we consider tranquillity and poise as the goal, not as the means for gaining any objects, and when one reaches that goal, the final state of peace and poise, he can declare: "I do not care what comes to me or what goes from me. I only care for absolute poise, for tranquillity, and peace within." When this is achieved, man's consciousness comes almost to the level of God-consciousness. He feels that there is nothing more to be attained. To quote a Sanskrit saying: "He has attained That, attaining which nothing remains to be attained." That final achievement can be described in terms of absolute peace, infinite poise, and perfect tranquillity. The human soul then lives in the state of divine bliss, but it goes without saying that such a state of realization comes to the lot of a very few. The rest are struggling to attain a certain degree of peace and calm, and the majority seek it only as a means for the attainment of desirable objects.

Now, even if you consider the attainment of these qualities only as a means for obtaining material objects, still you should analyze to find out the cause of the obstructions you meet with. Suppose, at the present moment you want to be a successful businessman; you want to gain more efficiency and power. That is your goal for the time being. If you find that a little disappointment in your business contacts, or some

irritation in your transactions, throws your mind whirling, you will look to controlling your reactions, your mental faculties, and adjusting your outlook on things. In order to do that you will have to analyze yourself. Why is it that a little trouble or disappointment throws your mind into a turmoil? What is behind your irritation and your anger? The first and perhaps the most important cause of disturbance that we cherish within is fear. No other cause creates such turmoil in our consciousness as this one enemy, fear. Analyze yourself carefully; go back to situations when you were upset, when you could not think straight, when you were irritated and lost your temper. Go deep into the cause, and you will discover that fear was lurking somewhere within, fear of losing your money, your friends, your prestige and position in life, your dignity, and so on. Fear weakened you and created a tumult in your consciousness; it robbed you of your strength, your poise, and your power.

Fear in the last analysis, is caused by lack of balance. Let us consider a concrete situation. Imagine there is a shipwreck and the passengers are very excited. In fact, they are frantic with fear. They are thinking of how precious their lives are, and of all the attachments they have to leave behind them. Do you think they could maintain any peace and poise at all? Even if they did seem to do so, I would say that although they might not be showing the tempest within, still they are afraid of losing their lives. Let us imagine the existence, in the midst of this group of people, of a person who is full of the consciousness that he is one with the divine Source, that it is God's power which is moving in his personality, in his individual form. He knows that death means nothing but the loss of the form, which is completely filled with God. He will be able to maintain tranquillity, calm, and poise in any situation because there is no fear in his

consciousness. He is united with God. Nothing can be taken away from him. It is only when we make matter our God and live for the thrill of the senses alone that death chases us like a bloodhound.

Of course, there is a difference of degree in the attainment of poise. One type of person may lack it completely; another may be able to maintain some amount of it; and a third may be established in God-consciousness, which is infinite peace and poise. Now what is the cause of the difference? The difference lies in the degree to which God-realization or perfection has been achieved. A person who has not been able to see perfection anywhere will be thrown into despair when anything threatens to do damage to his attachments and possessions, because he thinks they are the only things that can give him satisfaction and happiness. He will be overcome by agitation and fear, and will lose his balance completely. Suppose you find yourself at that stage of understanding. I would like to ask you a question. Why do you depend so hopelessly upon these things? You may try your best to gain more peace and poise through your contacts and experiences in the outer world, but these endeavors will prove to be nothing but patchwork. Can you tell me any circumstance in which the external world brought you any satisfaction and peace? Do you think your possessions give you any lasting satisfaction? I doubt it very much. However, there is something within you which will make you really contented, will satisfy all your desires. Of that I am certain. Hearing these words, perhaps you will stop and think about it, but only after repeated disappointments in your contacts with the world, after experiencing many sorrows and sufferings, tortures and tears, will you learn to turn towards that Source within.

The second type, the intermediate one, already has some

conviction regarding the existence of that Source within, that inner blissful Self, but he has not yet been able to depend upon it completely. If he does not achieve the success he thought would bring him happiness, if he meets with obstructions, he knows he has something to turn to, something within, and so he is not as disturbed as the first type. That is the great advantage of those who have attained this intermediate stage. They have not achieved the goal, but at least they have some conviction of the existence of that infinite Source within. And that itself is a great achievement. If you find yourself in that category, if you find that you are able to remain calm and poised under disturbing conditions, or if, fortunately, all of your contacts with this world are peaceful and full of happiness, even then you should analyze the situation carefully. You have to remember that your relationships and possessions have not created the happiness you feel. Your wealth, your relatives, your beautiful children—none of these has created this condition of happiness in you. Your happiness has always come from within. It was always that inner divinity shining out on the external objects which gave you the satisfaction and happiness you experienced. Even though you may feel that there is something within which is expressing itself in all your happiness, even though you may think that you have somewhat conquered fear, even though you may believe that your consciousness has attained to a higher level, still, if something threatens to take away from you these objects you will react, you will become upset. That means that you have not yet attained to the stage when you depend entirely upon God. You have not yet established a real contact, an inalienable relationship with God.

This is the condition of the intermediate type. They also have to struggle hard against fear. Analyze your fear, and give an antidote to such a condition by placing yourself in

closer contact with the divine Source. That is the only remedy. If you are afraid to die, put your soul in close contact with God. Know that your soul is a spark of God which cannot be extinguished by the cold breath of death. If you do that, there will be no reason to be afraid of death or of anything else. I have seen people who, as a result of their close contact with that Source within, could threaten death. I have seen that. I have told you before about the great Swami Turiyananda, one of the direct disciples of Ramakrishna. He had completely conquered fear. Death was no death for him. The secret of how he and other great disciples of Ramakrishna attained to that state of fearlessness regarding this phenomenon of phenomena, death, which most of us are so afraid of, is that they had raised their own level of consciousness to the level of God.

The more you keep a close contact with the divine Source, God, the less you are afraid of losing externals like relatives, money, property, youth, in fact this life itself. And thereby you remain calm and tranquil and enjoy life as it comes to you. If you are obsessed by fear and think you can enjoy your youth, your family, and your prosperity, I must tell you that that kind of enjoyment is very brittle; it is apt to break at any moment. It is not at all permanent; it is not abiding.

So, constantly, in and through all our relations with the world, we have to keep ourselves close to that divine Source within in order to conquer fear. Unless you see God in your relations, they are so many sources of fear. As soon as you discover Him, even faintly, behind them, more peace, harmony, and poise are brought into your life. If you consider your money, which governs your prosperity, comfort, and the means for the fulfillment of desires, as something alienated from God, you will be afraid. A subtle fear will remain

hidden in your consciousness. However, if you consider it as belonging to God, and that you are holding it on his behalf, you will not be afraid of its being taken away from you. God will then be much more important to you than the money. The same may be said regarding every item of your experience in the external world. We must establish a close contact with God.

It has been declared in the philosophy of the Upanishads that the one cause of suffering is ignorance. Ignorance is that which makes you forget divinity, God, and that ignorance spreads itself in the form of many other disturbances. Fear is the first-born of ignorance. When you are ignorant of the Truth, fear seizes you by the neck, making life miserable for you. We must not forget that fear is the result of our forgetfulness of God. Fear creates many apparitions. It creates, fundamentally, the apparition that we call our ego-consciousness. That is nothing but an apparition. There is no reality in what we call our own self; the reality is God. It is ignorance which begets fear, and that fear has presented before us this false notion of the "I am" consciousness. There are so many elements of fear stored in the "I am" consciousness; and the feeling that "I am mortal, I have to die," is the most subtle of these. If you stand alone and say: "I am a man (or a woman), I am rich, I am poor, I am beautiful, or I am homely," and so on, you are in danger of being attacked by fear. If you stand alone in the "I am" consciousness, you are in constant danger.

If you want to avoid that danger, you must establish a definite relationship of your "I am" consciousness with God. After the words, I am, use a phrase that will connect you with God. Say, "I am the child, the servant, the friend, the wor-

shiper of God," and so on. Have something behind your "I am" consciousness and you are safe. Remember if you stand alone you are in constant danger. If everything else in this world fails you, and sooner or later it will, that one thing will never fail you. No matter what happens, this relationship with God will never fail you. Do not think that your relatives, your money and other possessions, will give you lasting happiness. Depend upon God.

Again, by depending upon God I do not mean we should hate everything else. Hatred is worse than attachment; it creates more disturbances in the mind than attachment does. Depend upon God, fundamentally and essentially, and see him present in everything. Think that your relationships are gifts from God; your wealth has been given to you by God, and so on. A friend gives a flower. It is not the flower that matters, it is the love with which he gives it. The flower is gone in a day or two, but the love remains. We should look upon our relationships and possessions as tokens of God's love for us. Thus, life is freed from attachment, freed from fear and from hatred, and when these have been completely removed, our consciousness attains to a state of tranquillity and poise. It is then that God is revealed in the consciousness of man.

I HAVE often given you the beautiful illustration of a still, calm lake on which the full moon is reflected. If the water of the lake is in a constant turmoil, if the surface is covered with waves, ripples, froth and foam, you will not be able to see the clear reflection of the moon. What will you do? Will you pray to the moon to show himself to you? Your prayers and supplications would be of no avail. The moon would say: "I am always here. Why do you not keep the

surface of the lake smooth and unruffled?" The lake is your consciousness. If you keep it in a state of turmoil and agitation and pray to the divinity to be reflected there, the reply will be: "I am constantly reflecting myself on the lake of your consciousness, but you have done nothing to keep it in a quiet, calm, and tranquil state. So how can you expect to see me there?" God is already within us. We do not have to pray to get a vision of him. I do not mean to say that there is no benefit in prayer. That is a different matter. Just now I am emphasizing another, a most important item, which we usually neglect. That is, the necessity of establishing peace and poise in our consciousness. If you make that the aim of your endeavors, and if you consider your success in life by the amount, the degree, of tranquillity you have been able to establish, it will not be so very difficult to enjoy the reflection of divinity in your life.

So a life that is lived, fundamentally, with the aim of attaining God-consciousness, reaches a state of peace and bliss. If we neglect that aim and consider phenomena as our God and our senses as priests, it will not be possible to enjoy lasting peace, real poise, or perfect tranquillity. If we are at the stage where we can appreciate this, we may consider ourselves very fortunate. However, we should not adopt a critical attitude towards those who do not do so. Everyone must follow his own karma. If you preach this doctrine to the general mass of people you will be laughed at, I am sure. By experience only, man comes to understand these things. You will find millions and millions of people who do not know these words, "peace" and "poise." The word "contented" does not form a part of their vocabulary. (Well, perhaps they have heard of Carnation Milk, "from contented cows," as their advertising slogan says, but that is almost the extent of the meaning of the word for them!) But, I repeat,

we should not criticize anyone. To such a man I would say, "My friend, if you think that your relations, your money and other possessions will bring you happiness, go ahead, experience them, enjoy them, and find out what they really bring. Eventually, you will come to the understanding that what you are seeking cannot be had from them. Then you will turn within."

To the man who has gained some appreciation of the goal, I would say, "Brother, if you really want lasting peace in your life, establish your connection with God. Feel that it is God who is the inspirer of your thoughts, that it is God whom you are contacting in the external world, and fill yourself completely with his consciousness. If you do not yet aspire to attain to the level of the Source, if you still want to enjoy a little tumult, go on and enjoy it, but know that it is just an appearance of your God. Associate everything, everything with your God. Then, even through your enjoyments of life you will stay in close contact with him."

However, some day you will stop and say: "Now I want only God, God without any attributes, without any limitation. I want to remain absorbed in That; I do not want a separate ego from my God. I want that state of infinite poise, infinite bliss, and infinite perfection." You may not be ready for that just now, but it is bound to come. If, even now, while you are enjoying a certain amount of fulfillment from the external world you have the conviction that your inner being, the one who is deriving this happiness, is God, that enjoyment becomes healthy enjoyment, becomes freed from attachment. There is no fear, no attachment, for the objects of enjoyment, and for that reason there is a greater degree of happiness. There is more peace and poise in your consciousness. The more we raise the level of our consciousness towards God, the more poise we will feel.

The consciousness of man and God must meet. There is no other way. Life attains its final and complete fulfillment when the two levels become one, when the "I" merges into God, and when God alone exists, without any attributes, without any form, without any limitation whatsoever. That is infinite bliss. That is the culmination of peace and poise, and that we may call absolute perfection.

WHAT VEDANTA MEANS TO ME

ANN L. THOMPSON

IN ORDER to effectively relate what Vedanta means to me I shall have to describe the path by which I was drawn to it. In so doing, I may give the impression that whatever occurred was brought about by my own efforts. But as I look back on the network of events leading me to the present I am convinced that there is a karmic tendency, an impulse which rules endeavor and colors our existence with a constant, intriguing pull between the subtle qualities of mind and soul. It is my only purpose to convey that struggle, and to indicate the predisposed factors which I feel combine with the grace of God to form a path.

WHEN I was seven years old I came to a conclusion about life that has ever since shaped my tendencies. I was lying in bed one night, staring into the dark, and suddenly I told myself the only certainty in this world, the only fact I could be absolutely sure of, was the fact that some day, sooner or later, I must die, and everyone and everything I loved must change or die. It frightened me; but I was compelled to face it, and to seek a compensation for it, an identification or unity with something of an enduring quality, for above all else I possessed a deep craving for the unchangeable. And a search began.

The first outward indication of my search was a disdain

toward "material things" which I defined in accordance with how much or how little an element of mind and spirit existed therein. Of course "mind and spirit" were still somewhat nebulous terms. I had an idea that they were in opposition to the material and that they did have more of a permanent quality about them. Such objects as cars, clothes, furniture, etc., were apparently of a most unenduring substance and so the worship of, the frantic attainment of, such objects was to me a stupid waste of time. In the realm of human behavior I observed and decided that large parties, in which people milled aimlessly about in a cloud of smoke; drinking, which seemed to transform the characters of people; and other such remarkable definitions of "fun" which involved a lack of emphasis upon the more thoughtful aspects of human existence were disgusting and intolerable. As a child, I was unable to formulate my attitudes and externally I seemed to be an odd bundle of protests, mentally "off-in-the-clouds." Variously I would refer to my search for the immutable as "a dream" (in the sense of an ideal) or "a destiny" (in the sense of a fated course), and for years no one would understand what I was talking about. It is not surprising that I found myself rather isolated from the majority, but I was often blessed by the presence of certain relatives, teachers, and friends who saw fit to encourage my "peculiarities," and who helped me retain a strong feeling of tenderness toward people in general.

Meanwhile, during my earliest years, on a ranch in Southern California, I had established a rapport with animals, including the wild ones, and now (on the North Shore of Chicago) I turned to the study of zoology and determined to make it my life's work. It was during that study I began my acquaintance with India. Few other places on earth contained such an attractive variety of fauna, but those competing areas (the Amazon Region, Africa, Malaysia) somehow failed to

captivate me the same way that India did. You might say I was able to perceive and study the other areas; but I was able to *feel* India. The reason is debatable and unimportant. The fact remains that a small girl in a proper Midwest atmosphere was essentially alienated from her social environment and very much in love with a place she had no apparent affinity with.

Thus, I often tried to find spots where it was peaceful, away from the overly-active group of thrill seekers. I had one friend who was similarly inclined, and it was with her that I discovered, at the age of ten, my favorite childhood refuge: "The Asiatic Temple." We had been to a movie matinee and emerged from the theater to see that fog had rolled in from Lake Michigan, the land burdened with its shroud. Intrigued by the mysterious atmosphere, we decided to investigate the nearest beach. This was a part of the shoreline we were unfamiliar with. The beach was about thirty-five steps below the street level. We stood looking down in its clouded direction when gradually the fog separated and, to our amazement, we saw what appeared to be some kind of exotic structure in a state of ancient decay, its wide stone steps lapped by gentle waves of the lake. "It's a temple!" we decided. "An Asiatic Temple!" We walked down to the sands, up the stairs of our "temple" and seated ourselves on its balcony. I was moved with a tremendous joy and gratitude. Here I could indulge in my unreasonable longing and love for a land I had not seen—India—and be often alone, save for the quiet marvel of friendship. Here I could pursue my odd paradise of dreams without being ridiculed. After school and on weekends, whenever time paid us favor, we bicycled to that spot and, resting on the balcony or wide stone steps, in fog or sun, even in rain; looking out on calm or turbulent lake, wind-swept days, snow-filled, sand-blown—it always seemed a bit of heaven.

I DO NOT believe that the way we fill our days in childhood is "just kids' stuff." Indeed, this tangible and acute period with its mental imagery can urge us, against the tide, to seek what we crave, what we are intuitively stumbling toward. Our "temple," which was in truth the half-wrecked remains of a country club of the 1920's, was for me a chance to nurture an emotional identity with the future. Little did I suspect, even in my most active imaginings, that the land of India and the good people I would some day meet from it, also contained the prime concern of my life. But no barrier would ever exist between us.

However, in the study of zoology barriers were rising fast. No one had to convince me that various forms of being, from trees and flowers, to butterflies and birds, to snakes and bears were closely akin to man in some marvelous and beautiful fashion. A number of times, amid natural surroundings, I had experienced flights of exalted wonder that reduced me to tears of confusion and desire for I knew not what. It was the sort of unity that only a profound love can give, and yet it was distinctly not an end but a beginning. There seemed to me a fabric of natural existence in which I was integrally woven, no matter how else it appeared outwardly. My "reverence for life" was fast destroying me as a scientist, for by the time I entered more advanced biology and was instructed to regard animals "objectively" I decided that no amount of interest on my behalf could condone using the lives of fellow creatures for the sake of acquiring knowledge.

This also brought me to terms with my religion, Roman Catholicism. Upon inquiry, I was told that God created animals for the benefit of man. I considered that egotistical outlook beyond acceptance. I wondered if other Catholic views were equally objectionable to me, and began to look into the philosophical bases for the miscellaneous doctrines of The

Faith. It was the first occasion on which I questioned The Church. I had gone to Catholic school for eight years of my life and had absorbed in a largely undedicated fashion the necessary lessons. Catholics are frequently discouraged about questioning, and so when I actually applied myself to religious problems I was appalled by the various creeds and dogmas I had previously accepted. I found the One True Church idea, the eternal heaven or hell, God the Father as the final Godhead, the explanation for good and evil—all unreasonable. I regarded The Church with disdain, and though I still paid homage to Jesus Christ, I was critical of the outcome of his teachings in Catholicism, and attained no comfort in a perusal of other Christian churches. Most important, I sensed a firm lack of emphasis upon the mystic approach, and although it took me some time to fully realize this fact, it was the mystic in my nature which emphatically rejected the unfortunate stress upon dogma and doctrine in the majority of Christian faiths.

Between the loss of an intended profession and the loss of a religion I was quite certain (at the age of fifteen) that life was more a burden than an opportunity. But I decided to try to make the best of it, for I did have something to fall back on: the arts, mainly music and literature. Ever since I was a small child I had shown talent in both of these, talent which was encouraged by instructors who told me I *could* be a musician and writer *if* I would only show the same amount of interest in these pursuits as I had heretofore shown in natural history. So, finally aroused, I dove headlong into artistic studies. In college I divided my attention between music and writing for a period of six years. My original plan was to be a naturalist writer, thus utilizing interest in biology and serving conservationist goals. But I found little or no opportunity to remain in the country areas I loved, and grad-

ually, despite myself, I began to convey, with words, the tortured responses to city life, my enforced alienation from those glimpses of indefinable rapture I had often experienced in the vicinity of nature. It seemed that I was moving every day farther from that which gave meaning to existence.

Soon I suffered with the knowledge of how empty things were, and there came dark periods when I seemed to be fighting my way through an endless obscurity. I had moments of such overpowering despair I would be rendered immobile with apathy and finally moved only by anger or fear to weave romantic patterns from the comforting phrases of older people about me: "You need to find the right man"; "You need a measure of success in your work—encouragement, that's all"; "Some day this pain could produce a great work of art!"

Thus, by my early twenties I had become "the embittered young artist," spending hours discussing the significance of music and poetry, reaching toward life with a groping intensity. I was overwhelmed by the hypocrisy of our social order and cultivated a cynical attitude toward every form of authority. Along with my companions I claimed that life, in order to be expressed, must be fully experienced. We worshiped intellectual sophistication and glorified love, the peak of human emotion. Still, amid this worldly and discontented atmosphere, I never forgot my search, and art, touching upon the spirit and creating tangible beauty of profoundly intangible elements of being, nonetheless gave me no satisfied feeling that I was near to the unchangeable content I sought. Art, great art, did endure in a way, but I was inclined to think it was essentially not a reason but another attempt to secure that reason. Yet I clung to it tenaciously, for I had nothing else in which to believe, and I was frightened by the wide gap of longing within me. I read philosophy but discovered no hint

of what I needed most, and Romanticism held sway. I was bitterly and coldly intellectual outside, insecure and lost within. Then a remarkable event occurred which was to mark the beginning of an even greater struggle. I met a Vedantist.

ODDLY enough it was my old friend of the Asiatic Temple days who was responsible for the introduction. She invited me to her crowded little apartment on the Near North Side of Chicago, where a group of earnest college students gathered. A discussion of religion began and we argued with enthusiasm. Since none of us had anything but respect for one another and sincere interest in the subject at hand, it was both pleasant and challenging. The majority were Roman Catholics. There were two agnostics (including myself), one Protestant, and one young man who did not state the name of his philosophy but who seemed unusually sympathetic toward all, agreeing with everyone and no one! He gradually began to elucidate ideas of existence which commanded our attention. I, in particular, was so impressed I could not entirely comprehend the almost unbelievable sense of exhilaration at the sound of his words. Later, I asked who this fellow was exactly. He turned out to be a next-door neighbor of my friend, who told me he was "according to the grapevine, a Vedanta (Hindu) disciple of a Swami Vishwananda." Hindu! . . . India! . . . My old love, India! But in the previous obsession with her animals, the exotic flavor of her sights and sounds, it had never occurred to me to investigate her dominant religion. After all, everyone knew that Hinduism was sacred cows, and multiple-figured deities and mysterious yoga powers, etc. Colorful, but hardly to be taken seriously in our more educated part of the world! Yet now I had come upon the word "Vedanta" and a young man who was as logical a person as I had ever met.

I saw him twice after that, very briefly. He impressed me as being happy, warm but aloof, and, especially, good.

I began a philosophical investigation, and the initial conflict emerged. Although basically unhappy I was intensely devoted to the arts, if only because it was more than apparent that this should be my way of life, professionally. The very atmosphere I had once ignored—the atmosphere of competitive city life with its concert halls and conservatories and literary groups—spelled the motivating force, and I was told that the more chaotic and involved the emotions of the writer-musician, the better she expressed herself. Much to my disappointment, when it came to the application of Vedanta philosophy, I realized that it and my attitude as a struggling artist were in direct opposition. How could I ever focus within, toward the ideal of Reality, essentially unattached to the world, and still be a functioning writer and musician? Impossible! At this point I observed an imperative choice between two roads: 1) continue to embrace the deeply involved way of life that art seemed to demand; 2) seek for a teacher of Vedanta. My instructors and friends were art-worshipers, Romanticists, and it was where I appeared to belong, miserable or not. To settle the argument, I had fallen in love with a man of the "romantic artist" category. Chained by emotions, I continued to read Vedanta books, and knew with an increasing conviction that this was the explanation I had sought for. Often I imagined myself torn in half, until, finally, Vedanta's new attraction lay, decimated, before the overpowering adoration I gave to the man I loved. Perhaps, I sadly thought, Vedanta had come too late for me; in order to love without dissension, there remained no alternative but to continue as an agnostic.

I had made my choice. Tragic as it was then, but fortunate as I see it now, I learned from this period, and the man

who was the center of it, and my brief embrace of mankind's commonly pursued romantic goals, the worst kind of agony and deceit a human relationship is capable of bestowing. It sent me to a depth of despair in which I could no longer function as writer or musician and in which I believed that death would be not terrible but the best possible result.

I moved from Chicago to New York, found no solace in the change of environment; then returned to my native California. Still I could not conquer the love or its outcome. I thought of Vedanta but nurtured a deep sense of shame in having rejected it before. I felt I had no right to pursue it in desperation. I held that it was cowardly and hypocritical to turn to religion just because there was nowhere else to turn. Religion should be a positive step, born of faithful admiration. And so with this ridiculous and stubborn ideal preventing me from taking the right step, I turned to an accepted form of help, psychoanalysis, and spent two and a half years paying doctor bills while working in an office, having given up all artistic endeavor. Analysis enabled me to overcome turbulent emotions, but left me with an even greater sense of the aimless movement of life. It had one salutary effect: the idea that if the function of living remained unsatisfying, such inner defeat grew out of my own twisted perception and appraisal, not out of any external conditions. This thought, at least, pointed me in the right direction. I began by asking myself, how shall I best realize my potential? And what is that potential? I had not practiced music for three years; by necessity I was still removed from nature; and when I tried to write "creatively" I was confronted with the question, "Is there anything worth writing about?" Obviously my work potential left something to be desired and was dependent on another source of meaning. Furthermore, I was terribly angry with "my dream"—that still positive yearning for a beauty and love that did not

gradually melt away despite frantic attempts toward preservation. It was a stupid, idealistic lie, I told myself . . . . Or was it?

I needed belief, more so than ever before: this I could not deny. Fortunately, I had retained a copy of the Bhagavad-Gita. One morning I took the book off the shelf, flipped open to a page at random and these words appeared: "There in the ignorant heart where I dwell, by the grace of my mercy / I am knowledge, that brilliant lamp, dispelling its darkness." It resounded throughout every fiber of my being. I broke into tears, asking God to please show me the way. It was the first time I had spoken to God in many years.

WITHIN a short time I was reading every Vedanta book I could secure: absorbing, arguing, and challenging each idea presented, with a critical and unbelieving attitude. Vedanta always won. With a mere book about it in my hand I had the strangest sensation of relief, of emerging from some hideous dungeon into the pure air of light and freedom. I then started attending classes and lectures at the Vedanta Temple in Hollywood. Swami Prabhavananda and Swami Vandananda were more convincing than all the books combined and I began to fully realize why the importance of the teacher had always impressed me.

Ever since the early days of my search, the word "teacher" created an effect of reverence in my heart. I did not understand it, but when I approached teachers in school, and private teachers of art, I did so with the vivid idea that they (or whichever one happened to predominate at the moment) should hand me the key to knowledge, the way to indisputable meaning. I think my struggle intrigued them for they, one by one, responded with affection and concern, but were finally defeated by my requests. I do not for a moment doubt that

this tendency had a purpose, and when Swami Prabhavananda had said approximately ten words for the first time in my hearing, I knew quite beyond reason that at last my questions would be answered.

So I continued to inquire, and though a part of my disposition constantly rebelled, Vedanta continued to draw me closer. I had given up music altogether but resumed writing, and I still had doubts about art in relation to Vedanta. How could I possibly become enveloped in the activities of various misguided characters of my own making when I was dedicated to thinking of God alone? One might ask what the awful conflict was about; certainly art and Vedanta are not enemies, and one could believe in Vedanta, following it to the point where it did not interfere with a necessary way of living. I think that is entirely possible with some; but I also anticipated, correctly, that this philosophy would become for me a surrender—that there could be no "halfway" assimilation and at the same time contentment. If I called myself a Vedantist it would have to be wholeheartedly, fervently dedicated to its principles and its goal. I would have to reshape my attitude toward artistic achievement.

At first a gradual "meeting ground" voiced itself, aided by Swami Vivekananda's *Karma Yoga* and inspired with a goal pronounced by Tagore in his essay *The Religion of An Artist*: "It is for the artist to proclaim his faith in the everlasting Yes,—to say: 'I believe there is an ideal hovering over and permeating the earth, an ideal of that paradise which is not the mere outcome of fancy, but the ultimate Reality in which all things dwell and move.' " It finally occurred to me that if I worked for the sake of the work, offering its fruits to the Lord in accordance with Karma yoga; and tried, in accordance with Tagore's idea, to relate something of value, I would be on the right path.

This enabled me to move forward. But many of the problems we worry about and try to resolve before we make religion the center of our lives, best resolve themselves as the religious way unfolds within the mind and heart. What I anticipated proved to be only partially valid. What I worked so hard to prepare myself for was largely unnecessary. The writer bows in reverent and willing submission to the Hindu disciple, and no dangerous conflict arises. The best of our knowledge rests in the fact that peace of mind comes when we even try to resign ourselves to the will of God. The mere attempt is a reassurance.

But the most acute and inexplicable alteration was ahead. I called myself a "philosophical Hindu" and no one was going to convince me that ritual was anything but repulsive. (It undoubtedly recalled the childhood religion against which I had revolted.) As a member of the Vedanta Society I avoided the *pujas* (worships) and shuddered at the idea of such exalted philosophy being "reduced to such devotional nonsense." Then, through no attempt on my part, in fact much to my surprise, I began to feel overwhelmingly drawn to the words, the picture of, the thought of a holy man who had previously struck me as quite peculiar: Ramakrishna. In truth, I was aware of the beginning of a love, and soon that love, defeating intellectual protests, demanded expression and made me bow before the temple shrine. I do not know how to explain the sensation I had, immediately, of everything falling into place. I was no longer in conflict with myself. A neat pattern of devotion-intellect-work was forming. I began to observe the worship, entranced by its symbolism, and I realized that it was not ritual I disliked but only the ritual I had been obliged to attend while emotionally aloof. This Hindu ritual had meaning, because it gave expression to what I felt.

Yet, as time passed, more doubts were born. (I think reli-

gion specializes in uncalculated jolts, each one producing a type of resignation that gives additional strength.) Ramakrishna had captivated my heart to a degree beyond understanding. This yearning, I believed, must come after years of struggle to attain it, and I did not deserve such. I wondered, therefore, about the value of my feelings, until gradually the intrinsic qualities of religion were both logical and apparent, for I remembered that I had been seeking it since that night when I was seven years old. The emotion was not sudden. I merely awakened a little by the strength of God's most recent Divine Incarnation reaching out and touching the soul. When, through his grace, I beheld a faint glimmer of what this love contained, I knew with the greatest joy and hope I had ever experienced, that my search had not been in vain. And, in the inevitable trials and tribulations of spiritual endeavor, the temporary dark moments of anguish, I cannot forget the occasional glimpses of light that promise me an answer to what I have longed for since early youth.

I BELIEVE every search toward Vedanta is a search for truth-beauty-goodness, for perfect love, for the Reality that exceeds human circumstance. This is what "my dream" had spelled in no uncertain terms for me at the age of seven. It was an image in the perceptive mind of childhood knowledge: the birthright of realization. I have asked myself many times why the discriminative faculty did not hold and direct me, unwavering, along the correct path, and the only answer that seems at all reasonable is that intellectual acumen is not the key to the motivated personality. The emotional drives and goals are the true directional signals, and emotionally I was driven toward nature and music and literature rather than religious symbols. This may have been due to the fact that religion

in my immediate family was reduced to an aimless function, a prescribed emptiness. The Catholic faith gave no applicable directions for spiritual unfoldment; I was by nature a mystic and the church ignored the mystical way. But it was karma that placed me in a less advantageous environment than my disposition might have indicated. And there is no quarrel with karma! Through the grace of God, perception did not entirely fail, and every disappointment that drove me closer to Vedanta and the Lord was born of comparative analysis: nothing appeared quite worthwhile with a dream of the immutable hovering in this mind constantly. If I had made mistakes they too were for a purpose: some lesson unforgettably taught, or a youthful rebellion quenched. And God, in his infinite mercy, had been with me the while, observing, as he must with each of us, that I was his from the very start. Once when confronted with two paths I had taken the wrong one. I thanked the Lord that with pain and inner chaos my choice had been clearly designated wrong, and that now I had a chance to take the right one. I asked Swami Prabhavananda for help, which he bestowed with an attitude of gentle strength and affectionate regard. My intuition was correct: questions are being answered with remarkable thoroughness.

And so the struggle continues, but of a different substance: clear, contained, exemplified, with a goal that is not only truth, beauty, and goodness, but unchanging, indescribably an end in itself. I have found, essentially, a great joy, born of the grace of God, portrayed in the guru, resounding in the mantra, felt with each ray of love blossoming where in my own singular helplessness the Lord alone gives it light—all combined to form an enduring quality that unites and fills the soul with freedom. This is what Vedanta means to me.

THE PATH OF KNOWLEDGE

SWAMI SMARANANDA

BHASKALIN, a spiritual aspirant, went to Bhadva, the preceptor, and asked: "Revered Sir, teach me Brahman." The teacher did not answer. The disciple repeated his question, but the teacher remained silent. However, when questioned for a third time, Bhadva said: "I have already answered thy question. Silent is that Atman."

Shankara, the great saint and advaitic philosopher of the eighth century, narrates this incident from an Upanishad in his commentary on the Brahma Sutras or the Vedanta aphorisms. A similar parable is ascribed to Buddha. What is the significance of such stories? Vedanta insists that in the ultimate analysis, the Truth is indescribable, beyond words or thought. "Wherefrom words, along with the mind, turn back"—thus the Taittiriya Upanishad indicates the Ultimate Reality. The Kena Upanishad asserts: "The eye cannot approach It, neither speech, nor mind. It is different from what is known, and It is beyond what is unknown. Thus have we heard from the ancients who instructed us regarding It." The Upanishad adds further that he who thinks he has known It, does not know, while he who thinks he does not know, knows. Thus, according to the Vedanta, the Ultimate Truth is not within the grasp of the intellect or sense perception; it is supersensuous.

Now, if the Vedantic goal is the realization of this Absolute Truth which is beyond the reach of the senses or the

intellect, how are we to know It? Or is It knowable at all? What are the spiritual practices enjoined by Vedanta for the realization of this Truth? And what do these practices actually help us to accomplish? These are some of the questions we shall attempt to answer in the course of this paper.

That this Truth has been realized by various saints and sages in the long course of history, not only in India, but in other countries, too, is a recognized fact. The vast metaphysical edifice of Vedanta has been built upon the direct experience—immediate and intrinsic—of these great souls. Vedanta designates that the last court of appeal for proving the truth is not dialectics, but direct experience—*anubhava*. It is on this account that Vedanta considers the testimony of the Upanishads as the strongest proof. In the West, too, the realization of great mystics like Plotinus and Eckhart is in accord with that mentioned in the Upanishads. Other Christian mystics also come very near to advaitic experience, as testified by their declarations. In graphic language, the Bhagavad-Gita describes a man of realization, one who has steadied his consciousness: he has conquered all desires; he does not have to seek enjoyment outside; his mind is undisturbed by pleasure or pain; his love embraces everything, while he himself remains unmoved as a rock is in bad or good weather; he no longer has any egoism and desires, and even if they enter into him, he remains undisturbed, as the ocean remains undisturbed by the waters which flow into it. This kind of realization, though very difficult to attain, is the highest goal of human life. Even on pragmatic grounds, a religion which seeks this goal can be justified. As Swami Vivekananda declares: "In building character, in making for everything that is good and great, in bringing peace to others and peace to one's self, religion is the highest motive power, and therefore ought to be studied from that standpoint."

To realize this goal, Vedanta prescribes a threefold discipline: hearing, reflection, and meditation—*shravana, manana,* and *nidhidhyasana* as the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad describes it. Hearing means the hearing of the great Vedantic dicta such as "Thou art That," "Consciousness is Brahman," "This Atman is Brahman," and "I am Brahman." The purport of all Vedanta is to teach this ultimate unity of the Supreme Self and the individual self—that the *jiva* is no other than Brahman. Sri Ramakrishna used to narrate the story of the salt doll which went to measure the depths of the ocean and never returned to tell its story! Similar is our little self which, in its attempt to scale the depths of the Absolute gets merged in it. The Upanishads say that the knower of Brahman becomes Brahman. The Christian mystics, too, are in accord on this point. Witness what Ruysbroeck says: "All men who are exalted above their creatureliness into a contemplative life are within this Divine glory—yea, are that glory, and they see and feel and find in themselves by means of this Divine light that they are the same ground as to their uncreated nature." Eckhart is clearer in his declaration: "If therefore I am changed into God and He makes me one with Himself, then, by the living God, there is no distinction between us . . . . God and I: we are one. By knowing God, I take Him to myself. By loving God, I penetrate Him." Thus we find that the Vedanta preaches a religion where the mystic realization is the Essence, and regarding this Essence the mystics of all religions speak in similar language.

But the Vedanta reasons out that the *talk* of getting merged—this becoming—can be only on the empirical plane. For, from the ultimate point of view, "there can be no origination or dissolution, no one bound or aspiring, no one seeking after liberation or liberated," as Gaudapada, the great teacher of Advaita puts it. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad says that

"remaining Brahman, one attains It." How can one attain oneself? How can the Infinite ever become the finite, so as to necessitate great effort to regain Its infinity? It does not sound logical. Therefore, when we talk of attainment, it can be only in a figurative sense. What is actually aimed at in Vedantic *sadhana* (spiritual practice) is the removal of *avidya*—ignorance—which envelops the true nature of man, who is non-different from Brahman. The nature of this avidya is indescribable. The moment one is free from avidya one becomes aware of one's true nature in the transcendental state. Thus all our efforts, all our struggles are within the field of maya or avidya, this cosmic illusion. And Vedantic sadhana, too, is not outside maya, though sadhana is indispensable for liberation from the clutches of maya.

Therefore, the Vedantic dicta declaring the oneness of all existence have to be first heard. And, after having heard them, one has to reflect on them, then meditate on them. Through meditation one gains the transcendental vision and, with that, Brahman-knowledge.

But there is another school of Vedanta which considers hearing itself to be the cause of Brahman-knowledge. To illustrate its doctrine, a story is narrated: Ten men crossed a stream, and on reaching the opposite bank the leader counted them to see whether all had crossed over safely. But every time he counted he left out himself and so always found one short. This created confusion among the group. In the meanwhile, a wayfarer happened to come along, and observed the situation. He then pointed out that the leader himself was the tenth man, and the illusion of one less person was removed. Such is the case with the *jiva*, to whom the guru teaches his real nature, through the medium of the great sayings of the Upanishads quoted earlier. But the meaning this school of Vedanta attaches to the word "hearing" *(shravana)* is not the

usual one; for the world is here equated with the realization of Brahman *(Brahma-avagati)*. In fact, Shankara defines this word "hearing" as carrying the sense of "realization." Thus, in the ultimate analysis, a transcendental awareness of one's real nature—i.e. the unity with the absolute Brahman—is the cause of liberation according to Vedanta.

Now, one may ask, though we read and hear the great dicta of the Upanishads many a time, why do we not realize the Supreme Reality? The answer is that one must be fit, one must be fully prepared, one must have the capacity for transcendental awareness. How is that to be attained? For this purpose, one has to be a sincere aspirant, a seeker after liberation *(mumukshu)*. If there is no inner aspiration, no amount of yogic practices or intellectual gymnastics can help us reach the goal. The great religious truths, when imparted to unfit recipients, are like seeds sown on stony ground.

Swami Vivekananda describes the desire for liberation in a graphic manner: "When one realizes all this (worldly life) is slavery, then comes the desire to be free; an intense desire comes. If a piece of burning charcoal is placed on a man's head, see how he struggles to throw it off. Similar will be the struggles for freedom of a man who really understands that he is a slave of nature."

Again, mere aspiration without the requisite efforts and without the necessary qualifications serves no purpose. These qualifications are enumerated thus: 1. discrimination between the Eternal and transitory things; 2. dispassion for the enjoyment of sense-objects and their results; and 3. qualities such as internal calmness, self-control, self-withdrawal (from things external), fortitude, concentration, and faith. Let us discuss these briefly in serial order.

As long as a man considers the world around him to be real, it is impossible for him to seek God intensely. The one unchanging Reality exists behind this universe of flux. One has to be convinced of this fact and constantly discriminate that the world is impermanent, while its substratum, Brahman, is permanent. Thus alone an intense longing for realizing the Truth can arise. The Katha Upanishad declares: "He, the eternal among non-eternals, the intelligence in the intelligent, who, though one, fulfills the desires of many—those wise men who perceive Him within their own self, to them belongs eternal peace, and to none else." The world which is transient consists, when analyzed, only of name and form. Shankara asserts that the qualities of existence, luminosity (knowledge), and lovableness (bliss) belong to Brahman while the world consists of name and form. If the world is stripped of these two attributes it will slip through our fingers. The Chandogya Upanishad says that the clay alone is real, while forms, which are shaped out of it, are mere names.

There are two ways of discrimination: one of negation and another of assertion. In the path of negation, the things of the world are rejected as "not this, not this" (*neti, neti*) and Brahman is sought as the transcendental truth, while in the path of assertion the whole of existence is seen as one, as the manifestation of Brahman. Both these processes, the transcendent and immanent, are found in the Upanishads. The Svetasvatara Upanishad exclaims: "Thou art woman, Thou art man, Thou art the youth and the maiden, too. Thou art the old man tottering with his staff. Thou facest in all directions."

The capacity for discrimination can come about only if we are free from cravings for enjoyment, here and hereafter. No doubt, in the modern world, few bother themselves about the "hereafter," though all religions talk of heavens with

countless objects of enjoyment and unending pleasures. Modern man says: "Let me enjoy myself here, let me make the most of this life, let me have plenty of money, a beautiful wife and children, and so on. Why worry about another life?" All this would be fine if everyone could get what he seeks, and maintain it. But the fact is otherwise. Worldly enjoyment is a mirage which is never attained. As Swami Vivekananda poetically states: "Time, the avenger of everything, comes and nothing is left. He swallows up the saint and the sinner, the king and the peasant, the beautiful and the ugly; he leaves nothing. Everything is rushing towards that one goal—destruction . . . . We may try to cover our old and festering sores with a cloth of gold, but there comes a day when the cloth of gold is removed and the sore, in all its ugliness, is revealed." Such an analysis of the world need not lead to the conclusion that Vedanta is pessimistic; for it is neither pessimistic nor optimistic. Rather, it insists that there is no unmixed pleasure in this world.

Thus *vairagya* or dispassion comes only with the understanding that good and evil are the obverse and reverse of the same coin. And, having acquired such dispassion, one has to cultivate certain fundamental virtues, says the Vedanta. Perfect dispassion or perfect vairagya is the result of the perfect practice of six virtues or disciplines. Actually, they are interdependent. To attain perfection in each one of the disciplines is in itself a difficult task; it may be the work of a lifetime. But one need not get discouraged on that account; for it should be remembered that perfect renunciation and perfect selfishness can come only with God-realization. As the Bhagavata puts it: "Just as a man, in the process of eating, gains satisfaction, nourishment, and removal of hunger with every morsel, even so, devotion, God-realization and perfect renunciation come simultaneously." Again, Hindu belief encour-

ages spiritual effort by assuring us that no such effort is in vain; for we begin our next life from where we leave off the present; and this goes on till final realization of one's identity with Brahman is attained. Therefore, Sri Krishna assures Arjuna in the Gita: "My son, no doer of good ever comes to grief." However, an ardent aspirant has to be ever vigilant in the practice of the preliminary disciplines. Any neglect in this regard may verily spell doom. Shankara says that negligence may drag a man so far down that, like a ball rolling on a staircase, he cannot check his downward crash.

WE shall explain the six disciplines in brief:

1. *Internal Calmness* (*shama*) means controlling the mind and preventing it from externalizing. The nature of the mind is to remain always in a flux. It has to be brought under control by the constant practice of restraining outgoing thoughts. One of the ways to calm the mind is beautifully stated by the great yoga philosopher Patanjali: "Friendship, mercy, gladness, and indifference pacify the mind-stuff, if thought of in regard to others, who are happy, unhappy, good, or evil, respectively." This means that we will not be affected easily by others, if we can cultivate these attitudes of mind.

2. *Self-control* (*dama*) means the control of the sense organs. A man given to sense enjoyment can never dream of religion, let it be any religion.

3. *Self-withdrawal* (*uparati*) is the voluntary withdrawal of the senses from their objects. Swami Vivekananda describes this as the avoidance of thinking about sense-objects.

4. *Fortitude* (*titiksha*), as Swami Vivekananda says, is the most difficult of all these disciplines. Shankara defines it as the "bearing of all afflictions without caring to redress them and at the same time being free from anxiety or lament

on their account." This is what Jesus calls the nonresistance of evil. What a difficult ideal! Still one has to try to practice it; for only by this means can one get rid of one's identification with the body, mind, and ego.

5. *Concentration* (*samadhana*) is the constant practice of the remembrance of God, or remembrance of our true nature which is Brahman.

6. *Faith* (*shraddha*) is the firm belief in the truth of the scriptural teachings and the teachings of the guru or master. In fact, no activity, no progress is possible in this world without faith, what to talk of religion! If I do not believe fully in a higher life, why should I vex myself to attain it? And we should remember that our efforts are in proportion to our faith. Sister Nivedita mentions in *The Master As I Saw Him* the incident where a youth, who used to learn the Upanishads from Swami Abhedananda, asked one day, "Sir, is this all true?" The Swami replied, "Surely, my boy." And the very next day the young man was a lonely pilgrim on his way to the Himalayas, with only a loincloth as his apparel. He had set his mind, once and for all, on the realization of the ideal. Indeed, a tremendous faith of that kind alone can bring us to the doors of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Vedanta considers that only a person with a fair amount of success in these six disciplines can reap the benefit of hearing the great Upanishadic dicta and reflecting and meditating on them.

GOPAL'S MOTHER

PRAVRAJIKA ATMAPRANA

In Sri Ramakrishna's room at Dakshineswar, Narendranath one day met Gopal's Mother. Narendranath was then in his early twenties. He believed in the formless aspect of God and he hoped to achieve the highest realization by knowledge of the Divine. He not only had a dislike for image worship; he openly challenged even Sri Ramakrishna's visions and experiences and wanted to put them to the most rigorous tests of reason. Gopal's Mother, on the other hand, who was then over sixty, had attained, through simple devotion and faith, a vision of God in the form of Gopal, the Child Krishna. Sri Ramakrishna introduced these two to each other and then asked Gopal's Mother to narrate her experiences to Narendranath. He who believed in God in all aspects and accepted all paths as true found it great fun to bring believers of different views together. So, at his request, Gopal's Mother began her narration. As she spoke, remembering how Gopal had lived with her just like her own child, she relived that experience of joy, and tears flowed down her wrinkled cheeks. As she finished she said to Narendranath in a choked voice: "My child, you are learned and intelligent; I am a poor miserable person. I know nothing, understand nothing; please say if all this is mere imagination or real." His whole being filled with an intense love for God, Narendranath replied, "No, mother, what you have described seems to be all true."

Sri Ramakrishna called her Gopaler Ma or Gopal's Mother because her chosen ideal of God was Gopal. During

her whole life she had practiced that type of devotion which is called *vatsalyarati*, a longing for God in which the devotee looks upon God as a young child. This is considered one of the highest kinds of devotion because it cannot be developed as long as there remains in the mind the slightest consciousness of the powers of God. It is not often practiced, for how many would dare to strip God of all his glories and regard him as a child waiting helplessly to be nursed and looked after? Moreover, here the attitude of the devotee is one of giving to God and not of receiving anything from him. Who demands anything from a child?

The most common image of Gopal is that of the Child Krishna, less than one year of age, crawling on hands and knees, with the right hand raised in the gesture of asking for something, his face turned upwards as if gazing wistfully at someone. Aghoramani Devi—that was the given name of Gopal's Mother—who had none in the world to call her own, naturally and single-mindedly adopted this form of spiritual contemplation, and Gopal became the center of her life.

Even today, in the southern corner of the garden attached to the Radha-Krishna temple at Kamarhatty, stands a hut used as the women's apartment. There, in a small room with three windows opening towards the south and commanding a full view of the holy Ganges, lived Aghoramani Devi. Widowed at a very young age, she never went to live with her husband's family, but stayed in her parental house. Her brother, Nilamadhava Bandyopadhyaya, was a priest in this Radha-Krishna temple.

A vast property at Kamarhatty belonged to one Govinda Chandra Datta of Calcutta. He was a broker for a famous European house. After an attack of paralysis he retired to his garden house at Kamarhatty and built there a temple of Radha-Krishna. The rest of his life was spent in devout wor-

ship in the temple, listening to discourses on the scriptures from learned men, and engaging in other pious activities such as feeding the poor. He had one son who predeceased him; his two daughters were married. After his death the greater part of his property was lost. Fearing that the service at the temple might suffer also, his widow, a virtuous and pious woman, stayed at Kamarhatty from time to time and looked after the management of the temple. She lived an austere life, observing religious vows, and spent most of her time in the temple.

It was at this time that the priest's sister, Aghoramani Devi, began frequenting the temple. Being of a similar nature and leading an equally strict religious life, she soon became friends with the mistress of the temple. The two spent their time joyfully in service to the deities. As her love for God increased, Aghoramani Devi, by permission of her friend, began to stay in one of the rooms of the women's apartment.

Here, hidden from the eyes of the world, in the solitude and quiet of her room, she began her hard spiritual practices. Her *sadhana* was *japa*—repeating the name of God. Japa is not a mechanical repetition of the name of God; contemplation on the Ideal the name represents is essential in this process of mental purification. Japa is very effective in the path of spiritual advancement for, as Patanjali, the authority on yoga, says, it helps to remove all mental and physical obstacles such as disease, mental laziness, lack of enthusiasm, false perception, clinging to sense-enjoyment, etc. Swami Vivekananda, in his commentary on the Yoga Aphorisms, states: "It is the greatest stimulus that can be given to the spiritual tendencies." The japa-sadhana that Gopal's Mother practiced shows that she apparently lived entirely within her own thought. Sceptics might say that her mind, which was shut in upon itself, naturally had hallucinations concerning the Ideal

she concentrated upon. But we see in her life how she attained the highest realization through this discipline. It opened in her mind a channel, through which the power behind the name she repeated manifested itself in form: her Chosen Ideal, the Child Gopal. But the vision was attained only after thirty years of austere practices.

We find a picture of her daily life recorded in the *Lilaprasanga* (translated into English as *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master*), whose author, Swami Saradananda, knew her personally. She arose every morning at two and, after having her bath, she sat down for japa, which continued five or six hours at a stretch. Then she would go to the temple and perform whatever services were required of her. After the noonday worship at the temple she would return to her room, collecting firewood on the way, cook her meal, and rest for an hour or so. In the evening she again made japa which continued until a late hour in the night, broken only by the vesper services at the temple. Before retiring to bed she would take a cup of milk. Thus, for thirty long years, day in and day out, Aghoramani Devi continued her sadhana. Referring to this part of her life, Swami Vivekananda said to Sister Nivedita, after she had paid a visit to the saint of Kamarhatty, "Ah! This is the *old* India that you have seen, the India of prayers and tears, of vigils and fasts, that is passing away, never to return."

By 1884, the name of Sri Ramakrishna had become well known in Calcutta. Having heard about him, Aghoramani Devi and the mistress of the Radha-Krishna temple decided to pay him a visit at Dakshineswar. And so one cold December morning that year they went to Dakshineswar by boat. Sri Ramakrishna received them in his room. He was glad

to see the earnestness of these devoted souls, and gave them religious instructions. He sang a few devotional songs for them. When they took leave of him, he bade them come again. After they had left he remarked, "Ah! What an expression of devotion was on their faces. Their eyes were full of intense love for God. Even the sacred *tilak* on their foreheads looked wonderful."

The ladies, on their part, felt great respect for this holy man and they decided to visit him again. Engaged in various worldly duties the mistress of the temple, however, could not return to Dakshineswar. But, free as she was from worldly encumbrances, there was nothing to prevent Aghoramani Devi from visiting Sri Ramakrishna, so she journeyed back to Dakshineswar after only a few days. And thus began, during her sixtieth year, a new chapter in the life of this saint, which is as difficult to express in language as it is incomprehensible in spirit.

In keeping with tradition, she bought a few pice worth of sweetmeats before going to see the holy man, but as she was poor she could afford only the cheapest kind. As soon as Sri Ramakrishna saw her coming he cried out, "Oh! Here you are! What have you brought? Give it to me." She said later, "I shrank back, feeling ashamed of bringing out that worthless sweetmeat, knowing how so many people brought so many good things for him. Besides, that he should ask for it as soon as I came." But she could not say anything out of fear and shame and gave it to him. With great pleasure he started eating it, saying, "Why do you spend so much and bring sweets? Prepare cocoanut-balls yourself and bring one or two when you come. Or else, bring a little of whatever you cook for yourself. I wish to eat what you cook."

"Thus he went on talking only about eating," she related. "That day there was no talk about religion. I thought to

myself, 'I have indeed come to see a strange *sadhu* who talks only about eating. I am so miserably poor, how can I feed him? Very well, I shall not come here any more.' "

But as soon as she crossed the threshold to go home she felt as if someone was pulling her back, and she could proceed to Kamarhatty only with great difficulty. A few days later, the "Brahmani of Kamarhatty," as Sri Ramakrishna called her then, came to Dakshineswar again with some cooked food. On seeing her Ramakrishna, as before, at once asked for something to eat. Eating with great relish what she had brought with her, he said, "How delicious! It is like nectar indeed!" Tears rolled down the woman's cheeks, for she thought that he was praising her thus only because she was poor and could not afford to bring anything better.

Aghoramani's love and devotion for Sri Ramakrishna gradually brought about a change in her life. She who had not left the precincts of the Radha-Krishna temple for over three decades began frequenting the Dakshineswar temple. And on every visit she took Sri Ramakrishna something to eat, for she was sure he would ask for it. Her Gopal, she thought, had brought her to a wonderful holy man who, like Gopal himself, always demanded food! She complained to him once, "Gopal, is this the result of my devotion to you that you have brought me to a holy man who only wants to eat! I will go there no more." But some irresistible attraction always drew her back to him.

During this period Sri Ramakrishna once visited the Kamarhatty temple. He sang devotional songs there and the people were all moved to see his *bhava samadhi* (a state of ecstasy).

THEN, one day, there came to Aghoramani Devi the fulfillment of her devotions and austerities.

It was the spring of 1885. At three in the morning one day she was doing her japa as usual when she suddenly saw Sri Ramakrishna sitting near her on her left; his right hand was extended and clenched in a fist, a gesture just like Gopal's. She saw him very clearly—just as she used to see him at Dakshineswar. She thought to herself, "What is this? How did he come here at this odd hour?" To relate the story in her own words: "I saw Gopal (Sri Ramakrishna) smiling sweetly. As I took courage and caught hold of his left hand, he vanished, and lo! in his place I saw Gopal, a child of ten months—so big—(and she showed it with her hands) crawling on his knees, with one of his hands raised and looking at me. Ah! the beauty of it! And he said to me, 'Mother, give me butter.' Seeing and hearing this I felt faint, and cried aloud, so loudly did I cry out that had there been people staying around, they would have assembled there. Sobbing I said, 'My child, I am miserably poor. What shall I give you to eat? From where shall I get butter and milk for you, my child?' But did that wonder-child listen to me? He simply went on saying, 'Give me something to eat.' What could I do? I got up weeping and from a hanging basket brought down two dried cocoanut-balls and said, 'Gopal, my child, I am giving you this worthless thing to eat, but do not give me such food to eat.'

"I could not continue my japa that day. Gopal came and sat on my lap and snatched away the rosary. He rode on my shoulders and crawled all round the room. As soon as it was dawn I ran like a mad person to Dakshineswar. Gopal also went with me. I carried him in my arms and he rested his head on my shoulders and his rosy feet dangled on my breast."

Riding on the wave of esctatic joy and love, the "Brahmani of Kamarhatty" entered Sri Ramakrishna's room through the eastern door. She was not conscious of the outside

world. Her sari had fallen off her shoulders and was sweeping the floor. Her hair was disheveled and her eyes were turned upwards. She saw nothing but Sri Ramakrishna as he was sitting on his smaller bedstead facing the door, as though waiting for her. Without any explanation he understood her state of mind. When she came in and sat down on the floor in front of Sri Ramakrishna he entered into *bhava samadhi*. He got down from his bed and she fed him with the butter and milk she had brought with her. After some time, when his mind returned to the normal plane, he got up and sat on his bed again. But the ecstasy of Aghoramani did not end. She began to dance in the room, repeating "Brahma is dancing and Vishnu is dancing." Seeing her, Sri Ramakrishna said to another devotee who was present in the room, "See, she is completely filled with bliss. Her mind is in the world of Gopal, now."

Her ecstatic mood continued for a long time. Shedding profuse tears, she spoke about the divine vision: "Gopal is on my lap, there he enters your person (Sri Ramakrishna's) . . . there he comes out again, come my child, come to the lap of your poor mother." The pranks of Gopal persisted, and she was now convinced that Sri Ramakrishna was none else than her Gopal. She henceforth called him Gopal and she became "Gopal's Mother" in the real sense.

In order to lessen the intensity of her feelings Sri Ramakrishna made her eat something. Under the influence of her spiritual mood she continued to say, "Gopal, my child, your mother has spent her life in dire poverty. She earned her livelihood by selling sacred thread spun by her on the spindle. Is that the reason why you are taking so much care of her today?"

After spending the whole day at Dakshineswar she set out for Kamarhatty in the evening, Gopal going back with her.

A GREAT CHANGE came over Gopal's Mother, and she could no longer continue her old way of life. Her strict, orthodox practices and observances slowly relaxed. The reason for it was Gopal himself. He on whose name and form she had concentrated and contemplated all those years, was with her, throbbing with life and accepting her loving services—rather, not accepting but demanding! When she went to the garden to collect firewood, Gopal had to be taken with her; when she cooked, he looked on, waiting for her to feed him; when she slept, he had to be given a place next to her. One day he cried and cried for a pillow which the poor mother could not afford, and he was pacified only when she made him lay his head on her arm and promised to buy a pillow for him. Constantly looking after him thus, she spent two months. She had nothing more to strive for; yet by force of habit she sometimes tried to continue her japa. She did not realize that her sadhana was no longer necessary, until one day Sri Ramakrishna told her so: At Dakshineswar, after greeting Sri Ramakrishna, she sat in the *nahabat* counting her beads. When she finished and opened her eyes, she observed Sri Ramakrishna coming toward her. He said, "Why do you perform so much japa now? You have attained the highest."

"Shall I not perform japa then? Have I attained everything?" she asked.

"Yes, you have attained everything."

"Everything?"

"Yes, everything."

"What do you say? Have I really attained everything?"

"Yes, everything. Performance of japa, practicing penance etc. for your own self are no longer necessary. But, if you like, you may do these things for the sake of this body (pointing to himself) so that it may keep well."

Thus assured, she said, "Then whatever I will do from

now on will be for you." And she threw her rosary, rosary-bag, etc. into the Ganges.

When her spiritual mood subsided after two months, Gopal's Mother complained to Sri Ramakrishna: "What have you done to Gopal? What fault have I committed? Why do I not have your vision (in the form of Gopal) now?" He consoled her by saying, "If in this *Kali yuga* one has such visions continuously, one's body does not last. It lasts for twenty-one days only and then falls off like a dry leaf." She accepted his words with full faith.

As her visions became less frequent, she visited Dakshineswar more often and gradually accepted Sri Ramakrishna's circle of devotees as her own. He wanted her to live long so that all, especially women, would see and know this embodiment of vatsalyarati. Whenever he met her he showed as much respect to her as one would show to one's own mother. "This case is filled with Hari only, this body consists of Hari alone," he would point out to his devotees.

DURING the Chariot Festival of Lord Jagannath in 1885, Sri Ramakrishna went to Balaram Bose's house in Calcutta. He spoke to the devotees about the love-intoxicated experiences and visions of Gopal's Mother and asked them to send for her. His wish was complied with immediately; by evening she was brought to Calcutta. Sri Ramakrishna was sitting in the parlor talking to the devotees when the carriage that brought her reached the gate. All of a sudden an infusion of Gopal's spirit entered into him and transported him into another world. His body assumed the posture of Gopal and he remained immersed in bhava samadhi. When Gopal's Mother entered the room she saw him in the form of her Chosen Ideal and she was overwhelmed. The devotees who

witnessed this showed great reverence toward her, knowing that the strength of her devotion had forced Sri Ramakrishna to assume the form of the Child Gopal. Sister Nivedita beautifully wrote, "The sainthood of Gopaler Ma is as great as that of Paramahamsa [Sri Ramakrishna]. For in her was such motherhood that the heart of Ramakrishna became a child to her."

After reaching the highest stage of dualistic realization the mind of Gopal's Mother gradually began to scale the heights of nondualistic realization, in which the nutshell of conditioned divinity is broken and the soul feels its essential oneness with the Universal Consciousness. The immediate cause of this realization was the withdrawal of Sri Ramakrishna from the world. As can be understood, his absence deeply grieved her. For days she locked herself up in her room at Kamarhatty, feeling distraught. She had visions of him later that greatly assuaged her grief. But her vision of the universe as God came some time later. It was at Mahesh, during the time of the Chariot Festival of Lord Jagannath. While the chariot moved she saw that the chariot and the thronging thousands, all were Gopal. Inebriated by intense love, she lost external consciousness. Later on, describing her mood, she said, "At that time I was not myself; I danced and laughed, created a second Kurukshetra."

From then on she started visiting the monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, at Baranagore Math, and the monasteries at Alambazar and Belur. On such occasions the monks asked her to cook something that would be offered to Sri Ramakrishna. This she did, and solemnly offered it to him during worship. Sometimes she spent nights in the monastery, too; and without hesitation she mixed with Swami Vivekananda's foreign disciples.

She spent the last days of her life in Sister Nivedita's

house, where she went to stay in December of 1903. Having the saint in her house was, of course, a delight to Nivedita.

In Gopaler Ma's last illness her advaitic experience reached such heights that she saw Gopal within herself. When anything was given to her to eat she accepted it after offering it to Gopal or sometimes said, "Gopal, eat," and ate it herself, saying, "Gopal is in here."

She died on July 7, 1906, at the age of eighty. A glimpse of her life indicates within a humble form the splendor of the Divine.

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

ARNOLD J. TOYNBEE's address on the need for greater understanding among the religions of the world is printed in this magazine courtesy of the First Congregational Church of Los Angeles. Dr. Toynbee delivered the address at the First Congregational Church on March 31, 1963.

SWAMI GNANESWARANANDA was the founder of the Vivekananda-Vedanta Society of Chicago. His lecture on how to gain poise was given in 1935, two years before his untimely death. The editors of *Vedanta and the West* are grateful to Mallika Gupta for making this lecture available for publication.

ANN L. THOMPSON is a member of the Vedanta Society of Southern California.

SWAMI SMARANANANDA is a member of the Advaita Ashrama, a Ramakrishna Math center which publishes an English monthly and books in English and Hindi. The Swami has served both at Mayavati in the Himalayas and in the Ashrama's Calcutta office.

PRAVRAJIKA ATMAPRANA, a nun of the Ramakrishna Sarada Math, works at the Sister Nivedita School in Calcutta. Her recent book on *Sister Nivedita* was honored by the West Bengal government with an award for outstanding non-Bengali literature.

the title proposed, I had to abandon the piece without finishing it.

Now I am a Vedanta veteran. It has been apparent for some time that I am as "bad" as the other good people whose inadequate state of development once astonished me. Violent moods assail me. I am subject to temperamental outbursts. Patience is often wanting. I am not a beautiful character at all. I am still waiting for an answer to the question of why good people are so "bad." But now I count myself in their company.

The reason, of course, is that meditation has begun to make me—as it had already made the others—"authentic." Or perhaps the word is "honest." The goodness I once prided myself on was only skin deep. It consisted of an exterior manner cultivated for the purpose of easing my way through life. It sought to disguise, rather than to express, my true nature. It was meant to blind others, as it blinded me. But meditation is bringing me face to face with myself. It is making me frank, even guileless. It is causing me to give up hypocrisy. More and more I feel a necessity to accept, to be, and to express what I really am. The unpleasant things in me I no longer hide in a dark cellar where they can fester. They are brought up and taken outside where fresh air can disinfect them.

"Blessed are the pure in heart," Christ said, "for they shall see God." Sri Ramakrishna made a similar statement, that the essence of spiritual life is to make the heart and lips the same. The so-called unspiritual actions of the sincere aspirant, thus, are not unspiritual at all. They are marks of his progress. They reveal that he is becoming what he must become before he can see God—pure in heart, simple.

Vedanta and the West

Vedanta teaches that man's real nature is divine; that it is the aim of man's life to unfold and manifest this divinity; and that truth is universal. Vedanta accepts all the religions of the world and reveres the great prophets, teachers, and sons of God, because it recognizes the same divine inspiration in all.

STUDENT'S NOTEBOOK No. 29

When I first took up religious life I thought of myself as already well advanced. I saw my behavior as unusually moral, patient, and controlled. In human relations I believed my reactions to be ideal. It seemed only a matter of time before the goodness I felt I had attained should be crowned with an agreeable sainthood.

Considering how superior I felt myself to be, it was hard to understand why other aspirants were no farther advanced than they were. Senior monastics could be short-tempered, sharp-tongued, emotional. Devotees of long standing were subject to hurt feelings and jealousies. Most of my spiritual colleagues seemed, in fact, surprisingly limited in their development. I started to write an essay at this time, in which I tried to reason out this curious state of affairs. It was to be called: "Good People—Why Are They So Bad?" But, unable to find a satisfactory way of resolving the question

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